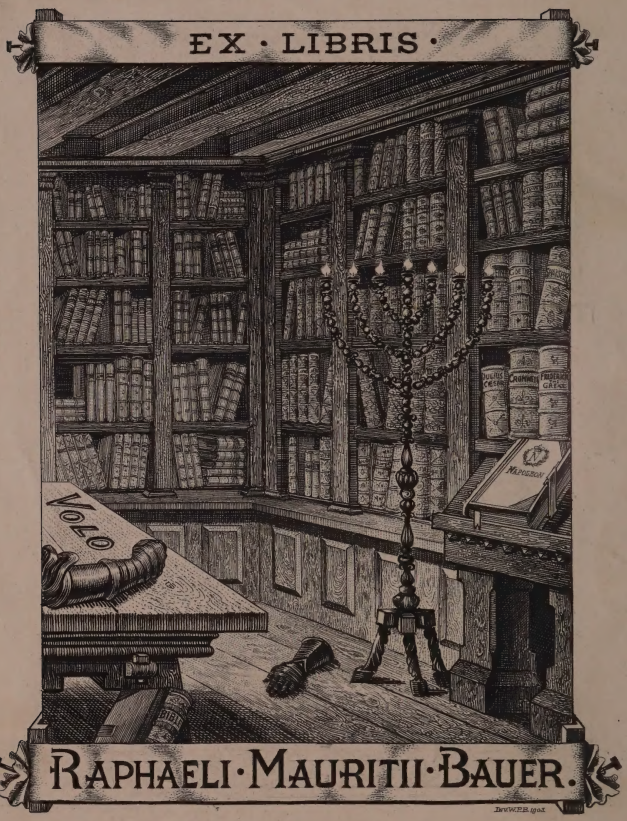
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WALDEN

OR

LIFE IN THE WOODS

VOLUME II

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NOTE TO PARTRIDGE NEST ILLUSTRATION.

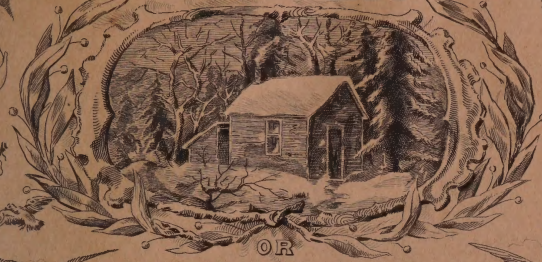
This nest was discovered May 18, 1908. The mother bird seemed to have displayed a notable lack of sagacity in its location, for it was placed at the foot of a pine tree within arm's length of the path leading from Brister's Spring, and less than a rod distant from the spring. The locality is one which is frequently visited, and it seemed certain that the nest would meet with disaster from the first small boy or dog or prowling fox that happened to pass that way.

During the next two weeks I visited the nest at intervals. Every time the bird would fly up with the usual startling whirr, invariably taking her course into the woods at right angles with the path. The nest was photographed just as the bird left it, with no attempt at arranging the eggs or their surroundings.

It is pleasant to record that one day when I came to the nest I found it empty, but otherwise undisturbed; indicating that in all probability the chicks had been successfully hatched and were perhaps taken at once by the mother bird off into the woods.

HERBERT W. GLEASON.

WALDEN



OR

LIFE IN THE WOODS

BY

HENRY D. THOREAU

BOSTON
THE BIBLIOPHILE SOCIETY
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CHAPTER VII — THE BEAN-FIELD

MEANWHILE my beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground; indeed, they were not easily to be put off.

What was the meaning of this so steady and self-respecting, this small Herculean labor, I knew not. I came to love my rows, my beans, though so many more than I wanted. They attached me to the earth, and so I got strength like Antæus. But why should I raise them? Only Heaven knows. This was my curious labor all summer — to make this portion of the earth's surface, which had yielded only cinquefoil, blackberries, johnswort, and the like, before, sweet wild fruits and pleasant flowers, produce instead this pulse.

What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? I cherish them, I hoe them, early and late I have an eye to them; and this is my day's work. It is a fine broad leaf to look on. My auxiliaries are the dews and rains which water this dry soil, and what fertility is in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks. The last have nibbled for me a quarter of an acre

clean. But what right had I to oust johnswort and the rest, and break up their ancient herb garden? Soon, however, the remaining beans will be too tough for them, and go forward to meet new foes.

When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. It is one of the oldest scenes stamped on my memory. And now tonight my flute has waked the echoes over that very water. The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth of oaks and pines is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture, and even I have at length helped to clothe that fabulous landscape of my infant dreams, and one of the results of my presence and influence is seen in these bean-leaves, corn blades, and potato vines.

I planted about two acres and a half of upland; and as it was only about fifteen years since the land was cleared, and I myself had got out two or three cords of stumps, I did not give it any manure; but in the course of the summer it appeared by the arrow-heads which I turned up in hoeing, that an extinct nation had anciently dwelt here and planted corn and beans ere white men came to clear the land, and so, to some extent, had exhausted the soil for this very crop. However, as it had lain fallow so long, I got a good crop.

Before yet any woodchuck or squirrel had run across the road, or the sun had got above the

shrub-oaks, while all the dew was on, though the farmers warned me against it, — I would advise you to do all your work if possible while the dew is on, — I began to level the ranks of haughty weeds in my bean-field and throw dust upon their heads. Early in the morning I worked bare-footed, dabbling like a plastic artist in the dewy and crumbling sand, but later in the day the sun blistered my feet. There the sun lighted me to hoe beans, pacing slowly backward and forward over that yellow gravelly upland, between the long green rows, fifteen rods; the one end terminating in a shrub-oak copse where I could rest in the shade, — the other in a blackberry field, where the green berries deepened their tints by the time I had made another bout. Removing the weeds, putting fresh soil about the bean-stems, and encouraging this weed which I had sown; making the yellow soil express its summer thought in bean-leaves and blossoms, rather than in wormwood and piper and millet grass, — making the earth say beans instead of grass — this was my daily work.

As I had little aid from horses or cattle, or hired men or boys, or improved implements of husbandry, I was much slower, and became much more intimate with my beans than usual. But labor of the hands, even when pursued to the verge of drudgery, is perhaps never the worst form of idleness. It has a constant and imperishable moral, and to the scholar it yields a classic result.

A very *agricola laboriosus* was I to travellers bound westward through Lincoln and Wayland

to nobody knows where; they sitting at their ease in gigs, with elbows on knees, and reins loosely hanging in festoons; I the home-staying, laborious native of the soil. But soon my homestead was out of their sight and thought. It was the only open and cultivated field for a great distance on either side of the road, so they made the most of it; and sometimes the man in the field heard more of travellers' gossip and comment than was meant for his ear: "Beans so late! peas so late!" — for I continued to plant when others had begun to hoe — the ministerial husbandman had not suspected it. "Corn, my boy, for fodder; corn for fodder." "Does he *live* there?" asks the black bonnet of the gray coat; and the hard-featured farmer reins up his grateful dobbin to inquire what you are doing where he sees no manure in the furrow, and recommends a little chip dirt, or any little waste stuff, or it may be ashes or plaster.

But here were two acres and a half of furrows, and only a hoe for cart and two hands to draw it — there being an aversion to other carts and horses — and chip dirt far away. Fellow-travellers as they rattled by compared it aloud with the fields which they had passed, so that I came to know how I stood in the agricultural world.

This was one field not in Mr. Colman's report. And, by the way, who estimates the value of the crop which Nature yields in the still wilder fields unimproved by man? The crop of *English* hay is carefully weighed, the moisture calculated, the silicates and the potash; but in all dells and pond holes in the woods and pastures and swamps

grows a rich and various crop only unreaped by man. Mine was, as it were, the connecting link between wild and cultivated fields; as some States are civilized, and others half-civilized, and others savage or barbarous, so my field was, though not in a bad sense, a half-cultivated field. They were beans cheerfully returning to their wild and primitive state that I cultivated, and my hoe played the *Ranz des Vaches* for them.

Near at hand, upon the topmost spray of a birch, sings the brown thrasher — or red mavis, as some love to call him — all the morning, glad of your society, that would find out another farmer's field if yours were not here. While you are planting the seed, he cries, — "Drop it, drop it, — cover it up, cover it up, — pull it up, pull it up, pull it up." But this was not corn, and so it was safe from such enemies as he. You may wonder what his rigmarole, his amateur Paganini performances on one string or on twenty, have to do with your planting, and yet prefer it to leached ashes or plaster. It was a cheap sort of top dressing in which I had entire faith.

As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lived under these heavens, and their small implements of war and hunting were brought to the light of this modern day. They lay mingled with other natural stones, some of which bore the marks of having been burned by Indian fires, and some by the sun, and also bits of pottery and glass brought hither by the recent cultivators of the soil.

When my hoe tinkled against the stones in my

bean-field, that music echoed to the woods and the sky, and was an accompaniment to my labor which yielded an instant and immeasurable crop. It was no longer beans that I hoed, nor I that hoed beans; and I confess that I sometimes remembered with as much pity as pride, if I remembered at all, my acquaintances who had gone to the city to attend the oratorios.

The night-hawk circled overhead in the sunny afternoons — for I sometimes made a day of it — like a mote in the eye, or in heaven's eye, falling from time to time with a swoop and a sound as if the heavens were rent, torn at last to very rags and tatters, and yet a seamless cope remained; small imps that fill the air and lay their eggs on the ground on bare sand or rocks on the tops of hills, where few have found them; graceful and slender like ripples caught up from the pond, as leaves are raised by the wind to float in the heavens; such kindredship is in Nature.

The hawk is aerial brother of the wave which he sails over and surveys, those his perfect air-inflated wings answering to the elemental unfledged pinions of the sea. Or when I rested in the shrub-oaks I watched a pair of hen-hawks circling high in the sky, alternately soaring and descending, approaching and leaving one another, as if they were the embodiment of some of my own thoughts, which soar as high and circle as majestically there. Sometimes I was attracted by the passage of wild pigeons from this wood to that, with a slight quivering winnowing sound and carrier haste; or from under a rotten stump my hoe turned up a sluggish, portentous, and out-

landish spotted salamander, a trace of Egypt and the Nile, yet our contemporary. When I paused to lean on my hoe, these sounds and sights I heard and saw anywhere in the row, a part of the inexhaustible entertainment which the country offers.

On gala days the town fires its great guns,[1] which echo like popguns to these woods, and some waifs of martial music occasionally penetrate thus far. To me, away there in my bean-field at the other end of the town, the big guns sounded as if a puff-ball had burst; and when there was a military turn-out of which I was ignorant, I have sometimes had a vague sense all the day of some sort of itching and disease in the horizon, as if some eruption would break out there soon — either scarlatina or canker-rash — until at length some more favorable puff of wind, making haste over the fields and up the Wayland road, brought me information of the "trainers." It seemed by the distant hum as if somebody's bees had swarmed, and that the neighbors, according to

[1] The gala days of Concord then, as now, were the 19th of April (anniversary of the Concord fight of 1775) and the 4th of July (anniversary of the Declaration of Independence). During Thoreau's residence at Walden the pro-slavery war with Mexico was going on, and it is occasionally mentioned by him. The Mr. Colman spoken of was a clergyman who took up farming, visited England, and was a recognized authority with Massachusetts farmers. The fact that the country was at war brought out the martial spirit of the Concord farmers and mechanics, especially on the Democratic side, — for Concord was quite equally divided in those days between Democrats and Whigs, with a fair sprinkling of voting abolitionists. There were two volunteer militia companies in the town, and several colonels and captains. — F. B. S.

Virgil's advice, by a faint *tintinnabulum* upon the most sonorous of their domestic utensils, were endeavoring to call them down into the hive again. And when the sound died quite away, and the hum had ceased, and the most favorable breezes told no tale, I knew that they had got the last drone of them all safely into the Middlesex hive again, and that now their minds were bent on the honey with which it was smeared.

I felt proud to know that the liberties of Massachusetts and of our fatherland were in such safe keeping; and as I turned to my hoeing again I was filled with an inexpressible confidence, and pursued my labor cheerfully with a calm trust in the future.

When there were several bands of musicians, it sounded as if all the village was a vast bellows, and all the buildings expanded and collapsed alternately with a din. But sometimes it was a really noble and inspiring strain that reached these woods, and the trumpet that sings of fame, and I felt as if I could spit a Mexican with a good relish, — for why should we always stand for trifles? — and looked round for a woodchuck or a skunk to exercise my chivalry upon. These martial strains seemed as far away as Palestine, and reminded me of a march of crusaders in the horizon, with a slight tantivy and tremulous motion of the elm-tree tops which overhang the village. This was one of the *great* days; though the sky had from my clearing only the same everlastingly great look that it wears daily, and I saw no difference in it.

It was a singular experience that long acquaint-

ance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them, — the last was the hardest of all, — I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans. When they were growing, I used to hoe from five o'clock in the morning till noon, and commonly spent the rest of the day about other affairs.

Consider the intimate and curious acquaintance one makes with various kinds of weeds, — it will bear some iteration in the account, for there was no little iteration in the labor, — disturbing their delicate organizations so ruthlessly, and making such invidious distinctions with his hoe, levelling whole ranks of one species, and sedulously cultivating another. That 's Roman wormwood, — that 's pigweed, — that 's sorrel, — that 's piper-grass, — have at him, chop him up, turn his roots upward to the sun, don't let him have a fibre in the shade, if you do he 'll turn himself t' other side up and be as green as a leek in two days.

A long war, not with cranes, but with weeds, those Trojans who had sun and rain and dews on their side. Daily the beans saw me come to their rescue armed with a hoe, and thin the ranks of their enemies, filling up the trenches with weedy dead. Many a lusty crest-waving Hector, that towered a whole foot above his crowding comrades, fell before my weapon and rolled in the dust.

Those summer days which some of my contemporaries devoted to the fine arts in Boston or Rome, and others to contemplation in India, and

others to trade in London or New York, I thus, with the other farmers of New England, devoted to husbandry. Not that I wanted beans to eat, for I am by nature a Pythagorean, so far as beans are concerned, whether they mean porridge or voting, and exchanged them for rice; but, perchance, as some must work in fields if only for the sake of tropes and expression, to serve a parable-maker one day.

It was on the whole a rare amusement, which, continued too long, might have become a dissipation. Though I gave them no manure, and did not hoe them all once, I hoed them unusually well as far as I went, and was paid for it in the end, "there being in truth," as Evelyn says, "no compost or lætation whatsoever comparable to this continual motion, repastination, and turning of the mould with the spade." "The earth," he adds elsewhere, "especially if fresh, has a certain magnetism in it, by which it attracts the salt, power, or virtue (call it either) which gives it life, and is the logic of all the labor and stir we keep about it, to sustain us; all dungings and other sordid tempering being but the vicars succedaneous to this improvement." Moreover, this being one of those "worn-out and exhausted lay fields which enjoy their Sabbath," had perchance, as Sir Kenelm Digby thinks likely, attracted "vital spirits" from the air. I harvested twelve bushels of beans.

But to be more particular, for it is complained that Mr. Colman has reported chiefly the expensive experiments of gentlemen farmers, my outgoes were —

For a hoe	$0 54	
Ploughing, harrowing, and furrowing	7 50	Too much
Beans for seed	3 12½	
Potatoes for seed	1 33	
Peas for seed	0 40	
Turnip seed	0 06	
White line for crow fence	0 02	
Horse cultivator and boy three hours	1 00	
Horse and cart to get crop	0 75	
In all	$14 72½	

My income was (patrem familias vendacem, non emacem esse oportet), from

Nine bushels and twelve quarts of beans sold	$16 94
Five bushels large potatoes	2 50
Nine bushels small	2 25
Grass	1 00
Stalks	0 75
In all	$23 44

Leaving a pecuniary profit, as I have elsewhere said, of . . $8 71½

This is the result of my experience in raising beans. Plant the common small white bush bean about the first of June, in rows three feet by eighteen inches apart, being careful to select fresh round and unmixed seed. First look out for worms, and supply vacancies by planting anew. Then look out for woodchucks, if it is an exposed place, for they will nibble off the earliest tender leaves almost clean as they go; and again, when the young tendrils make their appearance, they have notice of it, and will shear them off with both buds and young pods, sitting erect like a squirrel. But above all harvest as early as possible, if you would escape frosts and have a fair

and salable crop; you may save much loss by this means.

This further experience also I gained: I said to myself, I will not plant beans and corn with so much industry another summer, but such seeds, if the seed is not lost, as sincerity, truth, simplicity, faith, innocence, and the like, and see if they will not grow in this soil, even with less toil and manurance, and sustain me, for surely it has not been exhausted for these crops. Alas! I said this to myself; but now another summer is gone, and another, and another, and I am obliged to say to you, reader, that the seeds which I planted, if indeed they *were* the seeds of those virtues, were worm-eaten or had lost their vitality, and so did not come up.

Commonly men will only be brave as their fathers were brave or timid. This generation is very sure to plant corn and beans each new year precisely as the Indians did centuries ago and taught the first settlers to do, as if there were a fate in it. I saw an old man the other day, to my astonishment, making the holes with a hoe for the seventieth time at least, and not for himself to lie down in! But why should not the New Englander try new adventures, and not lay so much stress on his grain, his potato and grass crop, and his orchards — raise other crops than these? Why concern ourselves so much about our beans for seed, and not be concerned at all about a new generation of men?

We should really be fed and cheered if when we met a man we were sure to see that some of the qualities which I have named, which we all

prize more than those other productions, but which are for the most part broadcast and floating in the air, had taken root and grown in him. Here comes such a subtile and ineffable quality, for instance, as truth or justice, though the slightest amount or new variety of it, along the road. Our ambassadors should be instructed to send home such seeds as these, and Congress help to distribute them over all the land.

We should never stand upon ceremony with sincerity. We should never cheat and insult and banish one another by our meanness, if there were present the kernel of worth and friendliness. We should not meet thus in haste. Most men I do not meet at all, for they seem not to have time; they are busy about their beans. We would not deal with a man thus plodding ever, leaning on a hoe or a spade as a staff between his work, not as a mushroom, but partially risen out of the earth, something more than erect, like swallows alighted and walking on the ground: —

> "And as he spake, his wings would now and then
> Spread, as he meant to fly, then close again, —"

so that we should suspect that we might be conversing with an angel. Bread may not always nourish us; but it always does us good, it even takes stiffness out of our joints, and makes us supple and buoyant, when we knew not what ailed us, to recognize any generosity in man or Nature, to share any unmixed and heroic joy.

Methinks the farmer might have something to tell the professor. How much more aid might the

agricultural chemist offer to the farmer, if he were to some extent an agriculturist himself! Of what avail, if the man of science merely shows you how to do a thing which he cannot do (he says for want of leisure) and you cannot understand, — perhaps for the very same reason? Forsooth, to him it is so easy, and to you it is so hard that it is not worth while for either to try; and so the gifts of the gods are spilled between you.

Ancient poetry and mythology suggest, at least, that husbandry was once a sacred art; but it is pursued with irreverent haste and heedlessness by us, our object being to have large farms and large crops merely.

I would that my readers' thoughts on this subject should for once be as deliberate and slow as the pace of oxen, and as obedient to their divine instincts. The difference between the ancients, whoever they were, and ourselves may be seen in their different treatment of their fellow-laborer, the ox. We are accustomed to say that the ox is more profitable than the horse, because it not only costs less to keep it, but when it is past labor we can slaughter it, and it will furnish food for our families. We treat it as a slave rather than as a servant, and when it is worn out in our service, we slaughter the companion of our labors without a tear or any sign of gratitude.

If other nations, as the Egyptians, have been idolaters in this respect, and made these animals objects of adoration, we have gone to the other — and an equally fatal — extreme, for every animal should be approached with a sentiment of rever-

ence for its nature. I was pained to learn lately from a good authority that at Brighton, as it was found not to cause any serious diminution in the weight of their solid parts, cattle are starved for days before they are slaughtered, to save the expense of fodder. "According to the early laws of Greece," says a modern writer, "the ploughing ox was held sacred, and was entitled when past service to range the pastures in freedom and repose. It was forbidden, by the decrees of Triptolemus, to put to death this faithful ally of the labors of the husbandman, who shared the toils of ploughing and threshing.

Whenever therefore an ox was slaughtered, he must first be consecrated or devoted as a sacrifice (ἱερεῖον) by the sprinkling of the sacrificial barley; this was a precaution against the barbarous practice of eating raw flesh (βουφαγία). A peculiar sacrifice at Athens, at which the slayer of the ox fled, and the guilty axe was thrown into the sea, on the sentence of the Prytanes, yearly placed before the people a visible type of the first beginnings of their social institutions."

Ancient writers on agriculture speak of such things as the "dignity of the herd." Varro suggests that the object of the Argonautic expedition was a new species of sheep of finer wool than usual. The golden apples of the Hesperides were by the ambiguity of language goats and sheep which Hercules imported.

We have no festival, nor procession, nor ceremony, not excepting our Cattle-shows and so-called Thanksgivings, by which the farmer expresses a sense of the sacredness of his calling,

or is reminded of its sacred origin. It is the premium and the feast which tempt him. He sacrifices not to Ceres and the Terrestrial Jove, but to the infernal Plutus rather. By avarice and selfishness, and a grovelling habit, from which none of us is free, of regarding the soil as property, or the means of acquiring property chiefly, the landscape is deformed, husbandry is degraded with us, and the farmer leads the meanest of lives. He knows Nature but as a robber. Cato says that the profits of agriculture are particularly pious or just (*maximeque pius quæstus*), and according to Varro the old Romans "called the same earth Mother and Ceres, and thought that they who cultivated it led a pious and useful life, and that they alone were left of the race of King Saturn."

We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden. Therefore we should receive the benefit of his light and heat with a corresponding trust and magnanimity. What though I value the seed of these beans, and harvest that in the fall of the year? This broad field which I have looked at so long looks not to me as the principal cultivator, but away from me to influences more genial to it, which water and make it green.

These beans have results which are not harvested by me. Do they not grow for woodchucks

partly? The ear of wheat (in Latin *spica,* obsoletely *speca,* from *spe,* hope) should not be the only hope of the husbandman; its kernel or grain (*granum,* from *gerendo,* bearing) is not all that it bears. How, then, can our harvest fail? Shall I not rejoice also at the abundance of the weeds whose seeds are the granary of the birds? It matters little comparatively whether the fields fill the farmer's barns. The true husbandman will cease from anxiety, as the squirrels manifest no concern whether the woods will bear chestnuts this year or not, and finish his labor with every day, relinquishing all claim to the produce of his fields, and sacrificing in his mind not only his first but his last fruits also.

The landscape is deformed when we attempt to appropriate what in this cannot be appropriated.

CHAPTER VIII—THE VILLAGE

AFTER hoeing, or perhaps reading and writing, in the forenoon, I usually bathed again in the pond, swimming across one of its coves for a stint, and washed the dust of labor from my person, or smoothed out the last wrinkle which study had made, and for the afternoon was absolutely free. Every day or two I strolled to the village to hear some of the gossip which is incessantly going on there, circulating either from mouth to mouth, or from newspaper to newspaper, and which, taken in homœopathic doses, was really as refreshing in its way as the rustle of leaves and the peeping of frogs.

As I walked in the woods to see the birds and squirrels, so I walked in the village to see the men and boys; instead of the wind among the pines, I heard the carts rattle.

How often in years gone by have I seen a country man come into town a-shopping, in a high-set wagon, whose clothes looked as if they were made before the last war by a maiden sister, — no reproach to her! His coat hung so high that you could see the whole of his waistcoat pockets beneath it; while the scant coat-tail hastened to a speedy conclusion, like a frog couchant on a bank; the funnel-shaped sleeves halting at a respectful distance from his victorious

palms, and the collar, hard-rolled and round like a boa-constrictor, prompting you to run to his rescue, — or as if crisped by an agony of heat. His waistcoat striped like the zebra's skin, — a kind of coarse grating or gridiron over the furnace of his heart; his "pants" straight and round like a stove-pipe, into which his boots fitted smoke tight, at a height which preserved them "guiltless of his country's mud;" and his narrow-brimmed hat towering straight and round, like a column, to meet the sun in his rising, — of equal diameter throughout, — the torso of a shaft, or maybe a cenotaph to his brains, — with a nap as soft as a pussy, across which the dimpling shadows fly, as over a field of grain in autumn.[1]

I do not wonder that men read history; for I am as nearly related to the men of history as to any contemporary. Farthest India is nearer to me than Concord or Lexington.

Toward most of my neighbors I am compelled to feel (like the Chinese philosopher), "I am I and you are you; I am glad we can be so distinct."

In one direction from my house there was a colony of muskrats in the river meadows; under the grove of elms and buttonwoods in the other horizon was a village of busy men, — as curious

[1] Evidently Thoreau had carefully studied the appearance of his fellow-beings as they passed before his vision while he sat by his study-window or paced the streets of his village with long strides, as I have often seen him doing. This picture of the awkward country man from Carlisle or Boxborough is as exact as possible. Strangely enough, however, it was omitted from the printed editions. The "last war" was the war with England, 1812–13. — F. B. S.

to me as if they had been prairie dogs, each sitting at the mouth of its burrow, or running over to a neighbor's to gossip. I went there frequently to observe their habits.

The village appeared to me a great news room; and on one side, to support it, as once at Redding & Company's on State Street, they kept nuts and raisins, or salt and meal and other groceries. Some have such a vast appetite for the former commodity, that is, the news, and such sound digestive organs, that they can sit forever in public avenues without stirring, and let it simmer and whisper through them like the Etesian winds, or as if inhaling ether, it only producing numbness and insensibility to pain, — otherwise it would often be painful to hear, — without affecting the consciousness.

I hardly ever failed, when I rambled through the village, to see a row of such worthies, either sitting on a ladder sunning themselves, with their bodies inclined forward and their eyes glancing along the line this way and that, from time to time, with a voluptuous expression, or else leaning against a barn with their hands in their pockets, like caryatides, as if to prop it up. They, being commonly out of doors, heard whatever was in the wind. These are the coarsest mills, in which all gossip is first rudely digested or cracked up before it is emptied into finer and more delicate hoppers within doors. I observed that the vitals of the village were the grocery, the bar-room, the post-office, and the bank; and, as a necessary part of the machinery, they kept a bell, a big gun, and a fire-engine, at convenient places; and the houses

were so arranged as to make the most of mankind, in lanes and fronting one another, so that every traveller had to run the gauntlet, and every man, woman, and child might get a lick at him.

Of course, those who were stationed nearest to the head of the line, where they could most see and be seen, and have the first blow at him, paid the highest prices for their places; and the few straggling inhabitants in the outskirts, where long gaps in the line began to occur, and the traveller could get over walls or turn aside into cowpaths, and so escape, paid a very slight ground or window tax. Signs were hung out on all sides to allure him; some to catch him by the appetite, as the tavern and victualling cellar; some by the fancy, as the dry goods store and the jeweller's; and others by the hair or the feet or the skirts, as the barber, the shoemaker, or the tailor. Besides, there was a still more terrible standing invitation to call at every one of these houses, and company expected about these times.

For the most part I escaped wonderfully from these dangers, either by proceeding at once boldly and without deliberation to the goal, as is recommended to those who run the gauntlet, or by keeping my thoughts on high things, like Orpheus, who "loudly singing the praises of the gods to his lyre, drowned the voices of the Sirens, and kept out of danger." Sometimes I bolted suddenly, and nobody could tell my whereabouts, for I did not stand much about gracefulness, and never hesitated at a gap in a fence. I was even accustomed to make an irruption into some houses, where I was well entertained, and after

learning the kernels and very last sieve-ful of news, what had subsided, the prospects of war and peace, and whether the world was likely to hold together much longer, I was let out through the rear avenues, and so escaped to the woods again.

In the woods I kept neither dog, cat, cow, pig, nor hens, so that you would have said there was a deficiency of domestic sounds; neither the churn, nor the spinning-wheel, nor even the singing of the kettle, nor the hissing of the urn, nor children crying, to comfort one. An old-fashioned man would have lost his senses, or died of ennui before this. No cockerels to crow or hens to cackle in the yard. When I kept hens [1] once in the village, before I went to the woods, I remember that there was one white rooster in one of the broods that I reared, that went much by himself, — a stately faced young cockerel, that still had a good deal of the pheasant in him. The note of this once wild Indian pheasant is certainly the most remarkable

[1] This hen-keeping experience was probably while the Thoreau family lived in what has long been the Munroe house, at the corner of Main Street and Academy Lane, in the years that Henry was in College. This place, with its garden and trees, would be better adapted to poultry breeding than the Parkman house, with its narrower space and lack of trees, where the Town Library now stands. And Henry's "Gothic window" at the Munroe house, of which he wrote in 1835, that it "overlooked the kitchen garden," would be a favorable place for watching and listening to this brave Chanticleer. The verses are evidently of an early period. They, together with the entire paragraph preceding them here, were omitted from the printed editions. — F. B. S.

of any bird's. One night he was by chance shut out of the hen-yard, and, after long reconnoitring, and anxious going and coming, — with brave thoughts exalting him, and fancies rushing thick upon him, — crowing long, memoriter-wise of his Indian origin and wild descent, — he flew, bird-like, up into the branches of a tree, and went to roost there. And I, who had witnessed this passage in his private history, forthwith wrote these verses, and inscribed them to him: —

Poor bird! destined to lead thy life
  Far in the adventurous West,
And here to be debarred tonight
  From thy accustomed nest;

Must thou fall back upon old instinct now, —
Well-nigh extinct under Man's fickle care?

Did Heaven bestow its quenchless inner light,
So long ago, for thy small want tonight?
Why stand'st upon thy toes to crow so late?
The Moon is deaf to thy low, feathered fate.
Or dost thou think so to possess the night,
And people the drear dark with thy brave sprite?
And now with anxious eye thou look'st about,
While the relentless shade draws on its veil,
For some sure shelter from approaching dews,
And the invidious step of nightly foes?

I fear imprisonment has dulled thy wit,
Or ingrained servitude extinguished it;
But no, — dim memory of the days of yore,
By Brahmaputra and the Jumna's shore,
Where thy proud race flew swiftly o'er the heath,
And sought its food the jungle's shade beneath, —
Has taught thy wing to seek yon friendly trees,
As erst by Indus' banks or far Ganges.

This foreign bird's note is celebrated by the poets of all countries, along with the notes of their native songsters.

I saw the other day on the skirts of the village a family which for three months had had no bed but a wisp of straw on a board, and two Irish sheets; no furniture to their house but two plates, two bowls, two pewter spoons, and a knife without a handle, — for I took a careful inventory, — and no house but a shanty. There were two children who sat out of doors in fair weather, and enjoyed perfect leisure. They lived with the door open in midwinter, and yet, compared with the tenderly nurtured, felt but their share of cold. The father went three miles to his work, and carried nothing but a piece of bread for his dinner. The greater part of what he earns is sent to Ireland, to forward his remaining children to this land of plenty. Meanwhile Mrs. Oh Dear, president of the Charitable Society, has caught her death through a crack in her door; and Mrs. Fatewell is pining away, like a fly caught in a preserve pot, — and calls her disease sciatica.

It was very pleasant, when I stayed late in town, to launch myself into the night, especially if it was dark and tempestuous, and set sail from some bright village parlor or lecture room, with a bag of rye or Indian meal upon my shoulder, for my snug harbor in the woods, having made all tight without and withdrawn under hatches with a merry crew of thoughts, leaving only my outer man at the helm, or even tying up the helm when it was plain sailing. I had many a genial thought by the cabin fire "as I sailed."

I was never cast away nor distressed in any weather, though I encountered some severe storms. It is darker in the woods, even in common nights, than most suppose. I frequently had to look up at the opening between the trees above the path in order to learn my route, and, where there was no cart-path, to feel with my feet the faint track which I had worn, or steer by the known relation of particular trees which I felt with my hands, passing between two pines, for instance, not more than eighteen inches apart, in the midst of the woods, invariably in the darkest night.

Sometimes, after coming home thus late in a dark and muggy night, when my feet felt the path which my eyes could not see, dreaming and absent-minded all the way, until I was aroused by having to raise my hand to lift the latch, I have not been able to recall a single step of my walk, and I have thought that perhaps my body would find its way home if its master should forsake it, as the hand finds its way to the mouth without assistance.

Several times, when a visitor chanced to stay into evening, and it proved a dark night, I was obliged to conduct him to the cart-path in the rear of the house, and then point out to him the direction he was to pursue, and in keeping which he was to be guided rather by his feet than his eyes.

One very dark night I directed thus on their way two young men who had been fishing in the pond. They lived about a mile off through the woods, and were quite used to the route. A day

or two after, one of them told me that they wandered about the greater part of the night, close by their own premises, and did not get home till toward morning, by which time, as there had been several heavy showers in the mean while, and the leaves were very wet, they were drenched to their skins.

I have heard of many going astray even in the village streets, when the darkness was so thick that you could cut it with a knife, as the saying is. Some who live in the outskirts, having come to town a-shopping in their wagons, have been obliged to put up for the night; and gentlemen and ladies making a call have gone half a mile out of their way, feeling the sidewalk only with their feet, and not knowing when they turned. It is a surprising and memorable, as well as valuable experience, to be lost in the woods any time.

Often in a snow storm, even by day, one will come out upon a well-known road and yet find it impossible to tell which way leads to the village. Though he knows that he has travelled it a thousand times, he cannot recognize a feature in it, but it is as strange to him as if it were a road in Siberia. By night, of course, the perplexity is infinitely greater. In our most trivial walks, we are constantly, though unconsciously, steering like pilots by certain well-known beacons and headlands, and if we go beyond our usual course we still carry in our minds the bearing of some neighboring cape; and not till we are completely lost, or turned round, — for a man needs only to be turned round once with his eyes shut in

this world to be lost, — do we appreciate the vastness and strangeness of Nature.

Every man has to learn the points of compass again as often as he awakes, whether from sleep or any abstraction. Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations.

I once met a poor wretch asking for a lodging, whom it was almost a pleasure to befriend, he was so helpless. He said that he came from New York and was seeking work. He did not know where he lodged the night before, nor where he was then, but asked, "What place is this, Sir?" He knew only that he had travelled thirty miles that day. He could work about a stable, but he declared in a disconsolate voice that there was no work for him (as if the Fates had a spite against him). He thought that he had seriously injured himself by lying out. I asked him why he travelled so far in a day, and farther each successive day — if he was any better off at night than in the morning — why three miles would not do as well as thirty, and better? He allowed that I had the right of it.

I concluded that he was a desperate man who had committed some crime, — or whose whole life was a crime, — who was endeavoring to escape from himself. He travelled far, superficially, because he would not budge an inch in the direction of reform and a good conscience. He thought that nobody wished to employ him or would respect him, because he was conscious that he was unworthy to be employed, and did not respect

himself. If he could have had one half-hour of sanity, he would have found a job at the next door, and all the world would have appeared his friends.

He had travelled then 250 miles from New York in a straight line, with desperate steps, twenty-five or thirty miles a day, offering himself with a down look, anticipating failure, to do stable work at such stable yards as that radius happened to intersect; doing his part, as he would fain have believed, toward getting work; but there was none for him. He merely wished to convince the Fates that he was willing to do his part.[1]

One afternoon, near the end of the first summer, when I went to the village to get a shoe from the cobbler's, I was seized and put into jail, because, as I have elsewhere related, I did not pay a tax to, or recognize the authority of, the state which buys and sells men, women, and children, like cattle at the door of its senate-house.[2] I had

[1] Any apparent hardness of heart in Thoreau's mention of such exceptional cases was only his mode of speaking. Like all his family, he was very kind to the poor and helpless, and never incurred the ill-will of that class. His critics and scoffers were persons who felt themselves above him, and wished to show it by their comments; to such he was apt to be unrelenting, and his powers of criticism were much superior to theirs. — F. B. S.

[2] At the time when this was written, and even when it was published in 1854, the slave-trade in the District of Columbia was actively carried on, and slave-coffles and slave-auctions were not unknown in the neighborhood of the Capitol at Washington. Thoreau's attitude toward this national evil and shame was often stated by him, and he lived to see the whole North entertain much of his own view of the matter, though he died a few months before

gone down to the woods for other purposes. But, wherever a man goes, men will pursue and paw him with their dirty institutions, and, if they can, constrain him to belong to their desperate odd-fellow society.

It is true, I might have resisted forcibly with more or less effect, might have run "amok" against society; but I preferred that society should run "amok" against me, it being the desperate party.[1] However, I was released the

Lincoln's first proclamation of emancipation. His school-mate, William Whiting, was thought to have had some influence in bringing Lincoln's mind to the point of using the war-powers of the Constitution to abolish slavery. — F. B. S.

[1] The incident here touched upon was expanded by Thoreau into an essay on "Civil Disobedience" originally published in Miss Peabody's "Æsthetic Papers," and now included in the "Miscellanies." The scene of imprisonment was the old stone county prison, near where the manse of the Catholic parish priest now stands, — which, in fact, was formerly the gaoler's house. The gaoler at that time was Samuel Staples (a real name, though it sounds like a pun or myth), and the same who had before arrested Bronson Alcott for a like offence, — the refusal to pay a poll-tax in support of a state government which tolerated negro-slavery. In Alcott's case the tax was paid by Samuel Hoar, father of the Senator; but Thoreau's affectionate aunts have the credit of paying his tax and releasing him from confinement. He then went back to the cabin by Walden, "in season," he says, "to get my dinner of huckleberries on Fair Haven Hill." This was in a berry-party, such as he was in the habit of leading to the pastures where the berries grew best. This hill is better known as "The Cliffs," and was a favorite picnic resort of the Emersons, Alcotts and other Concord families, as well as of Thoreau. It is but half a mile from Thoreau's Cove at Walden. — F. B. S.

next day, obtained my mended shoe, and returned to the woods in season to get my dinner of huckleberries on Fair Haven Hill.

I was never molested by any person but those who represented the state. I had no lock nor bolt but for the desk which held my papers, not even a nail to put over my latch or windows. I never fastened my door night or day, though I was to be absent several days; not even when the next fall I spent a fortnight in the woods of Maine. And yet my house was more respected than if it had been surrounded by a file of soldiers. The tired rambler could rest and warm himself by my fire, the literary amuse himself with the few books on my table, or the curious, by opening my closet door, see what was left of my dinner, and what prospect I had of a supper. Yet, though many people of every class came this way to the pond, I suffered no serious inconvenience from these sources, and I never missed anything but one small book, a volume of Homer, which perhaps was improperly gilded, and this I trust a soldier of our camp has found by this time.

I am convinced, that if all men were to live as simply as I then did, thieving and robbery would be unknown. These take place only in communities where some have got more than is sufficient, while others have not enough. The Pope's Homers would soon get properly distributed —

> "Nec bella fuerunt,
> Faginus astabat dum scyphus ante dapes."

> "Nor wars did men molest,
> When only beechen bowls were in request."

"You who govern public affairs, what need have you to employ punishments? Love virtue, and the people will be virtuous. The virtues of a superior man are like the wind; the virtues of a common man are like the grass; the grass, when the wind passes over it, bends."[1]

[1] This short chapter has been much extended by inserting several passages in the MSS. for which no special place seems to have been designated in Thoreau's mind. They really belong here, since they related to the varied and often obscure activities of village life. Except for his few years at Walden, Thoreau was habitually a villager, living here and there in its straggling extent, and utilizing all the village opportunities. He was versed, also, in the village traditions of its odd inhabitants, and has this to say of one or two of them whom he perhaps remembered: —

"Breed was a barber in Concord Village, who kept his patrons awake by his wit. He had for neighbor a tailor, who thought himself above him, it is said, — but was thus punished by Breed's Muse: —

> Tailoring and barbering done with speed
> By John C. Newell and John C. Breed.

This is from my collection of old Concord poetry, which contained also some scraps from the works of Sim Davis, the fiddler, — but has nothing so long or so dull as Davenant's *Gondibert.*"

CHAPTER IX — THE PONDS

SOMETIMES, having had a surfeit of human society and gossip, and worn out all my village friends, I rambled still farther westward than I habitually dwell, into yet more unfrequented parts of the town, "to fresh woods and pastures new," and solitary swamps and meadows, or while the sun was setting, made my supper of huckleberries and blueberries on Fair Haven Hill, and laid up a store for several days. The fruits do not yield their true flavor to the purchaser of them, nor to him who raises them for the market. There is but one way to obtain it, yet few take that way.

If you would know the flavor of huckleberries, ask the cow-boy or the partridge. It is a vulgar error to suppose that you have tasted huckleberries who never plucked them from the bushes. A huckleberry never reaches Boston; they have not been known there since they grew on her three hills. The ambrosial and essential part of the fruit is lost with the bloom which is rubbed off in the market-cart, and they become mere provender. As long as Eternal Justice reigns, not one innocent huckleberry can be transported thither from the country's hills.

Occasionally, after my hoeing was done for the day, I joined some impatient companion who had been fishing on the pond since morning, as silent

and motionless as a duck or a floating leaf, and, after practising various kinds of philosophy, had concluded commonly, by the time I arrived, that he belonged to the ancient sect of Cœnobites.

There was one older man, an excellent fisher and skilled in all kinds of woodcraft, who was pleased to look upon my house as a building erected for the convenience of fishermen; and I was equally pleased when he sat in my doorway to arrange his lines. He left his boat in my charge and once in a while we sat together on the pond, he at one end of the boat and I at the other; but not many words passed between us, for he had grown deaf in his later years, but he occasionally hummed a psalm, which harmonized well enough with my philosophy. Our intercourse was thus altogether one of unbroken harmony, far more pleasing to remember than if it had been carried on by speech. When, as was commonly the case, I had none to commune with, I used to raise the echoes by striking with a paddle on the side of my boat, filling the surrounding woods with circling and dilating sound, stirring them up as the keeper of a menagerie his wild beasts, until I elicited a growl from every wooded vale and hill-side.

In warm evenings I frequently sat in the boat playing the flute, and saw the perch, which I seem to have charmed, hovering around me, and the moon travelling over the ribbed bottom, which was strewed with the wrecks of the forest. Formerly I had come to this pond adventurously, from time to time, in dark summer nights, with a com-

panion, and making a fire close to the water's edge, which we thought attracted the fishes, we caught pouts with a bunch of worms strung on a thread, and when we had done, far in the night, threw the burning brands high into the air like skyrockets, which, coming down into the pond, were quenched with a loud hissing, and we were suddenly groping in total darkness. Through this, whistling a tune, we took our way to the haunts of men again. But now I had made my home by the shore.

Sometimes, after staying in a village parlor till the family had all retired, I have returned to the woods, and, partly with a view to the next day's dinner, spent the hours of midnight fishing from a boat by moonlight, serenaded by owls and foxes, and hearing, from time to time, the note of the woodcock, or the booming of snipe a mile off, circling on the river meadows, or the croak of some unknown bird close at hand.

These experiences were very memorable and valuable to me, — anchored in forty feet of water, and twenty or thirty rods from the shore, surrounded sometimes by thousands of small perch and shiners, dimpling the surface with their tails in the moonlight, and communicating by a long flaxen line with mysterious nocturnal fishes which had their dwelling forty feet below, or sometimes dragging sixty feet of line about the pond as I drifted in the gentle night breeze, now and then feeling a slight vibration along it, indicative of some life prowling about its extremity, of dull uncertain blundering purpose there, and slow to make up its mind. At length you slowly raise,

pulling hand over hand, some horned pout squeaking and squirming to the upper air.

It was very queer, especially in dark nights, when your thoughts had wandered to vast and cosmogonal themes in other spheres, to feel this faint jerk, which came to interrupt your dreams and link you to Nature again. It seemed as if I might next cast my line upward into the air, as well as downward into this element which was scarcely more dense. Thus I caught two fishes, as it were, with one hook.

The scenery of Walden is on a humble scale, and, though very beautiful, does not approach to grandeur, nor can it much concern one who has not long frequented it or lived by its shore; yet this pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description. It is a clear and deep green well, half a mile long and a mile and three-quarters in circumference, and contains about sixty-one and a half acres; a perennial spring in the midst of pine and oak woods, without any visible inlet or outlet except by the clouds and evaporation. The surrounding hills rise abruptly from the water to the height of forty to eighty feet, though on the south-east and east they attain to about one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet respectively, within a quarter and a third of a mile. They are exclusively woodland.

All our Concord waters have two colors at least, one when viewed at a distance, and another, more proper, close at hand. The first depends more on the light, and follows the sky. In clear weather, in summer, they appear blue at a little

distance, especially if agitated, and at a great distance all appear alike. In stormy weather they are sometimes of a dark slate color. The sea, however, is said to be blue one day and green another without any perceptible change in the atmosphere.

I have seen our river, when, the landscape being covered with snow, both water and ice were almost as green as grass. Some consider blue "to be the color of pure water, whether liquid or solid." But, looking directly down into our waters from a boat, they are seen to be of very different colors. Walden is blue at one time and green at another, even from the same point of view. Lying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both. Viewed from a hill-top it reflects the color of the sky; but near at hand it is of a yellowish tint next the shore where you can see the sand, then a light green, which gradually deepens to a uniform dark green in the body of the pond. In some lights, viewed even from a hill-top, it is of a vivid green next the shore; but from a boat when the surface is calm it is seen to be of a uniform dark green. Some have referred this more obvious greenness next the shores as seen from the hills, to the reflection of the verdure; but it is equally green there against the railroad sand-bank, and in the spring, before the leaves are expanded, and it may be simply the result of the prevailing blue mixed with the yellow of the sand. Such is the color of its iris.

This is that portion, also, where in the spring, the ice being warmed by the heat of the sun reflected from the bottom, and also transmitted

through the earth, melts first and forms a narrow canal about the still frozen middle. Like the rest of our waters, when much agitated, in clear weather, so that the surface of the waves may reflect the sky at the right angle, or because there is more light mixed with it, it appears at a little distance of a darker blue than the sky itself; and at such a time, being on its surface, and looking with divided vision, so as to see the reflection, I have discerned a matchless and indescribable light blue, such as watered or changeable silks and sword blades suggest, more cerulean than the sky itself, alternating with the original dark green on the opposite sides of the waves, which last appeared but muddy in comparison. But without describing it more particularly, Walden is of a vitreous greenish blue, as I remember it, like those patches of the winter sky seen through cloud vistas in the west before sundown. Yet a single glass of its water held up to the light is as colorless as an equal quantity of air. It is well known that a large plate of glass will have a green tint, owing, as the makers say, to its "body," but a small piece of the same will be colorless. How large a body of Walden water would be required to reflect a green tint I have never proved.

The water of our river is black or a very dark brown to one looking directly down on it, and, like that of most ponds, imparts to the body of one bathing in it a yellowish tinge; but this water is of such crystalline purity that the body of the bather appears of an alabaster whiteness, still more unnatural, which, as the limbs are magnified

and distorted withal, produces a monstrous and ogre-like effect, making fit studies for the genius of a Michael Angelo.

The water is so transparent that the bottom can easily be discerned at the depth of twenty-five or thirty feet. Paddling over it, you may see many feet beneath the surface the schools of perch and shiners, perhaps only an inch long, yet the former easily distinguished by their transverse bars, and you think that they must be ascetic fish that find a subsistence there.

Once, in the winter, many years ago, when I had been cutting holes through the ice in order to catch pickerel, as I stepped ashore I tossed my axe back on to the ice, but, as if some evil genius had directed it, it slid four or five rods directly into one of the holes, where the water was twenty-five feet deep. Out of curiosity, I lay down on the ice and looked through the hole, until I saw the axe a little on one side, standing on its head, with its helve erect and gently swaying to and fro with the pulse of the pond; and there it might have stood erect and swaying till in the course of time the handle rotted off, if I had not disturbed it. Making another hole directly over it with an ice chisel which I had, and cutting down the longest birch I could find in the neighborhood with my knife, I made a slip-noose, which I attached to its end, and, letting it down carefully, passed it over the knob of the handle, and drew it by a line along the birch, and so pulled the axe out again.

The shore is composed of a belt of smooth rounded white stones like paving-stones, except-

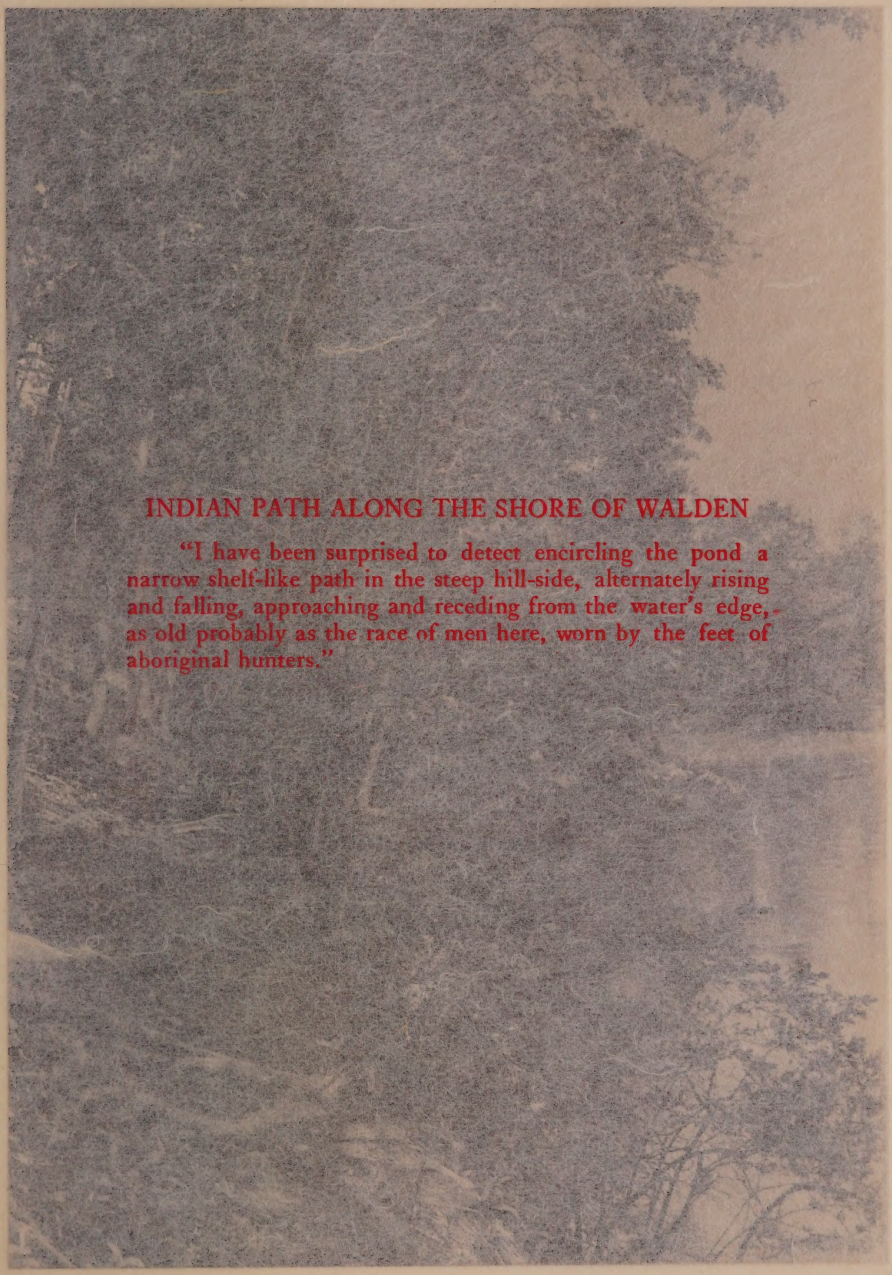
ing one or two short sand beaches, and is so steep that in many places a single leap will carry you into water over your head; and were it not for its remarkable transparency, that would be the last to be seen of its bottom till it rose on the opposite side. Some think it is bottomless. It is nowhere muddy, and a casual observer would say that there were no weeds at all in it; and of noticeable plants, except in the little meadows recently overflowed, which do not properly belong to it, a closer scrutiny does not detect a flag nor a bulrush, nor even a lily, yellow or white, but only a few small heart-leaves and potamogetons, and perhaps a water-target or two; all which however a bather might not perceive; and these plants are clean and bright like the element they grow in. The stones extend a rod or two into the water, and then the bottom is pure sand, except in the deepest parts, where there is usually a little sediment, probably from the decay of the leaves which have been wafted on to it so many successive falls; and a bright green weed is brought up on anchors, even in midwinter.

We have another pond just like this, White Pond at Nine Acre Corner, about two and a half miles westerly; but, though I am acquainted with most of the ponds within a dozen miles of this centre, I do not know a third one of this pure and well-like character. Successive nations, perchance, have drunk it, admired and fathomed it, and passed away, and still its water is green and pellucid as ever. Not an intermitting spring! Perhaps on that spring morning when Adam and Eve were driven out of Eden, Walden Pond was

already in existence, and even then breaking up in a gentle spring rain accompanied with mist and a southerly wind, and covered with myriads of ducks and geese, which had not heard of the Fall, when still such pure lakes sufficed them. Even then it had commenced to rise and fall, and had clarified its waters and colored them of the hue they now wear, and obtained a patent of Heaven to be the only Walden Pond in the world and distiller of celestial dews.

Who knows in how many unremembered nations' literatures this has been the Castalian Fountain? or what nymphs presided over it in the Golden Age? It is a gem of the first water, which Concord wears in her coronet.

Yet perchance the first who came to this well have left some trace of their footsteps. I have been surprised to detect encircling the pond, even where a thick wood has just been cut down on the shore, a narrow shelf-like path in the steep hillside, alternately rising and falling, approaching and receding from the water's edge, as old probably as the race of man here, worn by the feet of aboriginal hunters, and still from time to time unwittingly trodden by the present occupants of the land. This is particularly distinct to one standing on the middle of the pond in winter, just after a light snow has fallen, appearing as a clear undulating white line, unobscured by weeds and twigs, and very obvious a quarter of a mile off in many places where in summer it is hardly distinguishable close at hand. The snow reprints it, as it were, in clear white type alto-relievo. The ornamented grounds of villas which will one



INDIAN PATH ALONG THE SHORE OF WALDEN

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INDIAN PATH ALONG THE SHORE OF WALDEN

"I have been surprised to detect, encircling the pond a narrow shelf-like path in the steep hill-side, alternately rising and falling, approaching and receding from the water's edge, as old probably as the race of man here, worn by the feet of aboriginal hunters."

Perchance the first who came to this well have left some trace of their footsteps. I have even where a thick wood has just been cleared from the shore, a narrow shelf-like path in the steep hill-side, alternately rising and falling, approaching and receding from the water's edge, as old probably as the race of man here, worn by the feet of aboriginal hunters, and still from time to time unwittingly trodden by the present occupants of the land. This is particularly distinct to one standing on the middle of the pond in winter, just after a light snow has fallen, appearing as a clear undulating white line, marked out by weeds and twigs, and very obvious a quarter of a mile off in many places where in summer it is hardly distinguishable close at hand. The snow reprints it, as it were, in clear white type alto-relievo. The ornamental grounds of villas which will one

day be built here may still preserve some trace of this.

The pond rises and falls, but whether regularly or not, and within what period, nobody knows, though, as usual, many pretend to know. It is commonly higher in the winter and lower in the summer, though not corresponding to the general wet and dryness. I can remember when it was a foot or two lower, and also when it was at least five feet higher, than when I lived by it. There is a narrow sand-bar running into it with very deep water on one side, on which I helped boil a kettle of chowder, some six rods from the main shore, about the year 1824, which it has not been possible to do for twenty-five years; and, on the other hand, my friends used to listen with incredulity when I told them, that a few years later I was accustomed to fish from a boat in a secluded cove in the woods, fifteen rods from the only shore they knew, which place was long since converted into a meadow.

But the pond has risen steadily for two years past, and now, in the summer of '52, is just five feet higher than when I lived there, or as high as it was thirty years ago; and fishing goes on again in the meadow. This makes a difference of level, at the outside, of six or seven feet; and yet the water shed by the surrounding hills is insignificant in amount, and this overflow must be referred to causes which affect the deep springs. I have never detected any tide in it, though I have amused myself by thinking that with suitable instruments this might perchance be done.

This same summer the pond has begun to fall

again. It is remarkable that this fluctuation, whether periodical or not, appears thus to require many years for its accomplishment. I have observed one rise and a part of two falls, and I expect that a dozen or fifteen years hence the water will again be as low as I have ever known it.

Flint's Pond, a mile eastward, allowing for the disturbance occasioned by its inlets and outlets, and the smaller intermediate ponds also, sympathize with Walden, and recently attained their greatest height at the same time with the latter. The same is true, as far as my observation goes, of White Pond.

This rise and fall of Walden at long intervals serves this use, at least; the water standing at this great height for a year or more, though it makes it difficult to walk round it, kills the shrubs and trees that have sprung up about its edge since the last rise, — pitch-pines, birches, alders, aspens and others, — and, falling again, leaves an unobstructed shore; for, unlike many ponds and all waters which are subject to a daily tide, its shore is cleanest when the water is lowest.

On the side of the pond next my house a row of pitch-pines fifteen feet high has been killed and tipped over as if by a lever, and thus a stop put to their encroachments; and their size indicates how many years have elapsed since the last rise to this height. By this fluctuation the pond asserts its title to a shore, and thus the *shore* is *shorn*, and the trees cannot hold it by right of possession. These are the lips of the lake on which no beard grows. It licks its chaps from time to time. When the water is at its height, the alders,

willows, and maples send forth a mass of fibrous red roots several feet long from all sides of their stems in the water, and to the height of three or four feet from the ground, in the effort to maintain themselves; and I have known the high-blueberry bushes about the shore, which commonly produce no fruit, bear an abundant crop under these circumstances.

Some have been puzzled to tell how the shore became so regularly paved. My townsmen have all heard the tradition — the oldest people tell me that they heard it in their youth — that anciently the Indians were holding a pow-wow upon a hill here, which rose as high into the heavens as the pond now sinks deep into the earth, and they used much profanity, as the story goes, — though this vice, as I learn from the best authority, is one of which the Indians were never guilty, — and while they were thus engaged the hill shook and suddenly sank, and only one old squaw, named Walden, escaped, and from her the pond was named.

It has been conjectured that when the hill shook, these stones rolled down its side and became the present shore. It is very certain, at any rate, that once there was no pond here, and now there is one; and this Indian fable does not in any respect conflict with the account of that ancient settler whom I have mentioned, who remembers so well when he first came here with his divining rod, saw a thin vapor rising from the sward, and the hazel pointed steadily downward, and he concluded to dig a well here. As for the stones, many still think that they are hardly to be accounted for by the action of the waves on these

hills; but I observe that the surrounding hills are remarkably full of the same kind of stones, so that they have been obliged to pile them up in walls on both sides of the railroad cut nearest the pond; and, moreover, there are most stones where the shore is most abrupt; so that, unfortunately, it is no longer a mystery to me. I detect the paver. If the name was not derived from that of some English locality, — Saffron Walden, for instance, — one might suppose that it was called originally *Walled-in* Pond.

The pond was my well ready dug. For four months in the year its water is as cold as it is pure at all times; and I think that it is then as good as any, if not the best, in the town. In the winter, all water which is exposed to the air is colder than springs and wells which are protected from it. The temperature of the pond water which had stood in the room where I sat from five o'clock in the afternoon till noon the next day, the sixth of March, 1846, the thermometer having been up to 65° or 70° some of the time, owing partly to the sun on the roof, was 42°, or one degree colder than the water of one of the coldest wells in the village just drawn.

The temperature of the Boiling Spring the same day was 45°, or the warmest of any water tried, though it is the coldest that I know of in summer, when, beside, shallow and stagnant surface water is not mingled with it. Moreover, in summer, Walden never becomes so warm as most water which is exposed to the sun, on account of its depth. In the warmest weather I usually placed a pailful in my cellar, where it became cool in the

night, and remained so during the day; though I also resorted to a spring in the neighborhood. It was as good when a week old as the day it was dipped, and had no taste of the pump. Whoever camps for a week in summer by the shore of a pond, needs only bury a pail of water a few feet deep in the shade of his camp to be independent of the luxury of ice.

There have been caught in Walden pickerel, one weighing seven pounds, — to say nothing of another which carried off a reel with great velocity, which the fisherman safely set down at eight pounds because he did not see him; perch and pouts, some of each weighing over two pounds, shiners, chivins or roach (*Leuciscus pulchellus*), a very few breams, and a couple of eels, one weighing four pounds — I am thus particular because the weight of a fish is commonly its only title to fame, and these are the only eels I have heard of here; — also, I have a faint recollection of a little fish some five inches long, with silvery sides and a greenish back, somewhat dace-like in its character, which I mention here chiefly to link my facts to fable.

Nevertheless, this pond is not very fertile in fish. Its pickerel, though not abundant, are its chief boast. I have seen at one time lying on the ice pickerel of at least three different forms and colors: a long and shallow one, steel-colored, most like those caught in the river; a bright golden kind, with greenish reflections and remarkably deep, with short head; both of these were mottled on their sides with an irregular network of dark brown or black lines often extending over the

back — the meshes about ¾ of an inch long and producing longitudinal stripes more or less distinct and continuous, and they very pure white beneath — these are the most common here; and another golden-colored, and shaped like the last, but peppered on the sides with small dark brown or black spots, intermixed with a few faint blood-red ones, very much like a trout. The specific name *reticulatus* would not apply to this; it should be *guttatus* rather. These are all very firm fish, and weigh more than their size promises.

The shiners, pouts, and perch also, and indeed all the fishes which inhabit this pond, are much cleaner, handsomer, and firmer fleshed than those in the river and most other ponds, as the water is purer, and they can easily be distinguished from them. Probably many ichthyologists would make new varieties of some of them.

There are also a clean race of frogs and tortoises, and a few mussels in it; muskrats and minks leave their traces about it, and occasionally a travelling mud-turtle visits it. Sometimes when I pushed off my boat in the morning, I disturbed a great mud-turtle which had secreted himself under the boat in the night. Ducks and geese frequent it in the spring and fall, the white-bellied swallows (*Hirundo bicolor*) skim over it, and the peet-weets (*Totanus macularius*) "teter" along its stony shores all summer. I have sometimes disturbed a fish-hawk sitting on a white-pine over the water; but I doubt if it is ever profaned by the wing of a gull, like Fair Haven. At most, it tolerates one annual loon. These are all the animals of consequence which frequent it now. I

once saved the life of a dog which came near drowning when it had got half way across against a high wind.

You may see from a boat, in calm weather, near the sandy eastern shore, where the water is eight or ten feet deep, and also in some other parts of the pond, some circular heaps half a dozen feet in diameter by a foot in height, consisting of small stones less than a hen's egg in size, where all around is bare sand. At first you wonder if the Indians could have formed them on the ice for any purpose, and so, when the ice melted, they sank to the bottom; but they are too regular and some of them plainly too fresh for that. They are similar to those found in rivers; but as there are no suckers nor lampreys in Walden, I know not by what fish they could be made. Perhaps they are the nests of the chivin. These lend a pleasing mystery to the bottom.

The shore is irregular enough not to be monotonous. I have in my mind's eye the western, indented with deep bays, the bolder northern, and the beautifully scolloped southern shore, where successive capes overlap each other and suggest unexplored coves between. The forest has never so good a setting, nor is so distinctly beautiful, as when seen from the middle of a small lake amid hills which rise from the water's edge; for the water in which it is reflected not only makes the best foreground in such a case, but, with its winding shore, the most natural and agreeable boundary to it. There is no rawness nor imperfection in its edge there, as where the axe has cleared a part, or a cultivated field abuts on it. The trees

have ample room to expand on the water side, and each sends forth its most vigorous branch to fringe the shore. There Nature has woven a natural selvage, and the eye rises by just gradations from the low shrubs of the shore to the highest trees. There are few traces of man's hand to be seen. The water laves the shore as it did a thousand years ago.

A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluviatile trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows.

Standing on the smooth sandy beach at the east end of the pond, in a calm September afternoon, when a slight haze makes the opposite shore-line indistinct, I have seen whence came the expression, "the glassy surface of a lake." When you invert your head, it looks like a thread of finest gossamer stretched across the valley, and gleaming against the distant pine woods, separating one stratum of the atmosphere from another. You would think that you could walk dry under it to the opposite hills, and that the swallows which skim over might perch on it. Indeed, they sometimes dive below the line, as it were by mistake, and are undeceived.

As you look over the pond westward you are obliged to employ both your hands to defend your eyes against the reflected as well as the true sun, for they are equally bright; and if, between the two, you survey its surface critically, it is literally

as smooth as glass, except where the skater insects, at equal intervals scattered over its whole extent, by their motions in the sun produce the finest imaginable sparkle on it; or, perchance, a duck plumes itself, or, as I have said, a swallow skims so low as to touch it. It may be that in the distance a fish describes an arc of three or four feet in the air, and there is one bright flash where it emerges, and another where it strikes the water; sometimes the whole silvery arc is revealed; or here and there, perhaps, is a thistledown floating on its surface, which the fishes dart at and so dimple it again. It is like molten glass cooled but not congealed, and the few motes in it are pure and beautiful, like the imperfections in glass.

You may often detect a yet smoother and darker water, separated from the rest as if by an invisible cobweb, boom of the water nymphs, resting on it. From a hill-top you can see a fish leap in almost any part; for not a pickerel or shiner picks an insect from this smooth surface but it manifestly disturbs the equilibrium of the whole lake. It is wonderful with what elaborateness this simple fact is advertised, — this piscine murder will out, — and from my distant perch I distinguish the circling undulations when they are half a dozen rods in diameter.

You can even detect a water-bug (*Gyrinus*) ceaselessly progressing over the smooth surface a quarter of a mile off; for they furrow the water slightly, making a conspicuous ripple bounded by two diverging lines, but the skaters glide over it without rippling it perceptibly. When the sur-

face is considerably agitated there are no skaters nor waterbugs on it, but apparently, in calm days, they leave their havens and adventurously glide forth from the shore by short impulses till they completely cover it.

The skaters and water-bugs finally disappear in the latter part of October, when the severe frosts have come; and then and in November, usually, in a calm day, there is absolutely nothing to ripple the surface.

It is a soothing employment, on one of those fine days in the fall when all the warmth of the sun is fully appreciated, to sit on a stump on such a height as this, overlooking the pond, and study the dimpling circles which are incessantly inscribed on its otherwise invisible surface amid the reflected skies and trees. Over this great expanse there is no disturbance but it is thus at once gently smoothed away and assuaged, as, when a vase of water is jarred, the trembling circles seek the shore, and all is smooth again. Not a fish can leap or an insect fall on the pond but it is thus reported in circling dimples, in lines of beauty, — as it were the constant welling up of its fountains, the gentle pulsing of its life, the heaving of its breast. The thrills of joy and thrills of pain are undistinguishable.

How peaceful the phenomena of the lake! Again the works of man shine as in the spring. Ay, every leaf and twig and stone and cobweb sparkles now at mid-afternoon as when covered with dew in a spring morning. Every motion of an oar or an insect produces a flash of light; and if a paddle falls, how sweet the echo!

In such a day, in September or October, Walden is a perfect forest mirror, set round with stones as precious to my eye as if fewer or rarer. Nothing so fair, so pure, and at the same time so large, as a lake, perchance, lies on the surface of the earth. Sky water. It needs no fence. Nations come and go without defiling it. It is a mirror which no stone can crack, whose quicksilver will never wear off, whose gilding Nature continually repairs; no storms, no dust, can dim its surface ever fresh; — a mirror in which all impurity presented to it sinks, swept and dusted by the sun's hazy brush, — this the light dust-cloth, — which retains no breath that is breathed on it, but sends its own to float as clouds high above its surface, and be reflected in its bosom still.

A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air. It is continually receiving new life and motion from above. It is intermediate in its nature between land and sky. On land only the grass and trees wave, but the water itself is rippled by the wind. I see where the breeze dashes across it by the streaks or flakes of light. It is remarkable that we can look down on its surface. We shall, perhaps, look down thus on the surface of air at length, and mark where a still subtler spirit sweeps over it.

One November afternoon, in the calm at the end of a rain storm of several days' duration, when the sky was still completely overcast and the air was full of mist, I observed that the pond was remarkably smooth, so that it was difficult to distinguish its surface; though it no longer reflected

the bright tints of October, but the sombre November colors of the surrounding hills. Though I passed over it as gently as possible, the slight undulations produced by my boat extended almost as far as I could see, and gave a ribbed appearance to the reflections. But, as I was looking over the surface, I saw here and there at a distance a faint glimmer, as if some skater insects which had escaped the frosts might be collected there, or, perchance, the surface, being so smooth, betrayed where a spring welled up from the bottom. Paddling gently to one of these places, I was surprised to find myself surrounded by myriads of small perch, about five inches long, of a rich bronze color in the green water, sporting there and constantly rising to the surface and dimpling it, sometimes leaving bubbles on it.

In such transparent and seemingly bottomless water, reflecting the clouds, I seemed to be floating through the air as in a balloon, and their swimming impressed me as a kind of flight or hovering, as if they were a compact flock of birds passing just beneath my level on the right or left, their fins, like sails, set all around them. There were many such schools in the pond, apparently improving the short season before winter would draw an icy shutter over their broad skylight, sometimes giving to the surface an appearance as if a slight breeze struck it, or a few rain-drops fell there.

When I approached carelessly and alarmed them, they made a sudden plash and rippling with their tails, as if one had struck the water with a brushy bough, and instantly took refuge in the

depths. At length the wind rose, the mist increased, and the waves began to run, and the perch leaped much higher than before, half out of water, a hundred black points, three inches long, at once above the surface. Even as late as the fifth of December, one year, I saw some dimples on the surface, and thinking it was going to rain hard immediately — the air being full of mist — I made haste to take my place at the oars and row homeward; already the rain seemed rapidly increasing, though I felt none on my cheek, and I anticipated a thorough soaking. But suddenly the dimples ceased, for they were produced by the perch, which the noise of my oars had scared into the depths, and I saw their schools dimly disappearing. So I spent a dry afternoon after all.

An old man who used to frequent this pond nearly sixty years ago, when it was dark with surrounding forests, tells me that in those days he sometimes saw it all alive with ducks and other water-fowl, and that there were many eagles about it. He came here a-fishing, and used an old log canoe which he found on the shore. It was made of two white-pine logs dug out and pinned together, and was cut off square at the ends. It was very clumsy, but lasted a great many years before it became water-logged and perhaps sank to the bottom. He did not know whose it was; it belonged to the pond. He used to make a cable for his anchor of strips of hickory bark tied together. An old man, a potter, who lived by the pond before the Revolution, told him once that there was an iron chest at the bottom, and that

he had seen it. Sometimes it would come floating up to the shore; but when you went towards it, it would go back into deep water and disappear. I was pleased to hear of the old log canoe, which took the place of an Indian one of the same material but more graceful construction, which perchance had first been a tree on the bank, and then, as it were, fell into the water, to float there for a generation; the most proper vessel for the lake.

I remember that when I first looked into these depths there were many large trunks to be seen indistinctly lying on the bottom, which had either been blown over formerly, or left on the ice at the last cutting, when wood was cheaper; but now they have mostly disappeared.

When I first paddled a boat on Walden, it was completely surrounded by thick and lofty pine and oak woods, and in some of its coves grape-vines had run over the trees next the water and formed bowers under which a boat could pass. The hills which form its shores are so steep, and the woods on them were then so high, that, as you looked down from the west end, it had the appearance of an amphitheatre for some kind of sylvan spectacle. I have spent many an hour, when I was younger, floating over its surface as the zephyr willed, having paddled my boat to the middle, and lying on my back across the seats, in a summer forenoon, dreaming awake, until I was aroused by the boat touching the sand, and I arose to see what shore my fates had impelled me to; days when idleness was the most attractive and productive industry.

Many a forenoon have I stolen away, preferring to spend thus the most valued part of the

day; for I was rich, if not in money, in sunny hours and summer days, and spent them lavishly; nor do I regret that I did not waste more of them in the workshop or the teacher's desk, — in which last two places I have spent many of them.

What if all ponds were shallow — would it not react on the minds of men? I thank God that he made this pond deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite some ponds will be thought bottomless.

But since I left those shores the woodchoppers have still further laid them waste, and now for many a year there will be no more rambling through the aisles of the wood, with occasional vistas through which you see the water. My Muse may be excused if she is silent henceforth. How can you expect the birds to sing when their groves are cut down?

Now the trunks of trees on the bottom, and the old log canoe, and the dark surrounding woods, are gone, and the villagers, who scarcely know where it lies, instead of going to the pond to bathe or drink, are thinking to bring its water, which should be as sacred as the Ganges at least, to the village in a pipe,[1] to wash their dishes with! — to earn their Walden by the turning of a cock or drawing of a plug!

That devilish Iron Horse, whose ear-rending

[1] The plan of drawing water from Walden for the service of the village was given up during Thoreau's lifetime, and it was not till some eight years after his death that Flint's Pond was drawn upon for that service, as being higher, and thus furnishing a stronger pressure. I was living in the Thoreau house at the time, and introduced the pipes there. — F. B. S.

neigh is heard throughout the town, has muddied the Boiling Spring with his foot, and he it is that has browsed off all the woods on Walden shore, that Trojan horse, with a thousand men in his belly, introduced by mercenary Greeks! Where is the country's champion, the Moore of Moore Hall, to meet him at the Deep Cut, and thrust an avenging lance between the ribs of the bloated pest?

Nevertheless, of all the characters I have known, perhaps Walden wears best, and best preserves its purity. Many men have been likened to it, but few deserve that honor. Though the woodchoppers have laid bare first this shore and then that, and the Irish have built their sties by it, and the railroad has infringed on its border, and the ice-men have skimmed it once, it is itself unchanged, the same water which my youthful eyes fell on; all the change is in me. It has not acquired one permanent wrinkle after all its ripples. Though I have changed, it has not. It is perennially young, and I may stand and see a swallow dip apparently to pick an insect from its surface as of yore. It struck me again to-night, as if I had not seen it almost daily for more than twenty years — why, here is Walden, the same woodland lake that I discovered so many years ago; where a forest was cut down last winter another is springing up by its shore as lustily as ever; the same thought is welling up to its surface that was then; it is the same liquid joy and happiness to itself and its Maker, ay, and it *may* be to me. It is the work of a brave man surely, in whom there was no guile! He rounded this

water with his hand, deepened and clarified it in his thought, and in his will bequeathed it to Concord. I see by its face that it is visited by the same reflection; and I can almost say, Walden, is it you?

It is a real place, —
(Boston, I tell it to your face;)
It is no dream of mine,
To ornament a line;
I cannot come nearer to God and Heaven
Than I live to Walden even.
It's a part of me which I have not profaned;
I live by the shore of me, — detained.
Laden with my dregs
I stand on my legs,
While all my pure wine
I to Nature consign.

I am its stony shore,
And the breeze that passes o'er;
In the hollow of my hand
Are its water and its sand,
And its deepest resort
Lies high in my thought.[1]

[1] These verses were considerably garbled in printing; the first and second lines, and lines seven to thirteen inclusive, having been omitted entirely. Perhaps the verses could well have been spared altogether, but for a few good lines, and for the extreme pantheism which they embody, — which would have been censured or laughed at in 1854. If the bad rhyme in the last lines, illustrating that Yankee colloquialism, "thort" for "thought," "tort" for "taught," etc., had caught Emerson's eye or ear, he would have excluded the verses; and perhaps that was the printer's reason for leaving them out.

In strong contrast to this verse stands the classic poem on "Smoke" in Chapter XIII, — not written for it, but inserted there from his portfolio of verses, which got dis-

The cars never pause to look at it; yet I fancy that the engineers and firemen and brakemen, and those passengers who have a season ticket and see it often, are better men for the sight. The engineer does not forget at night, or his nature does not, that he has beheld this vision of serenity and purity once at least during the day. Though seen but once, it helps to wash out State Street and the engine's soot. One proposes that it be called "God's Drop."

I have said that Walden has no visible inlet nor outlet, but it is on the one hand distantly and indirectly related to Flint's Pond, which is more elevated, by a chain of small ponds coming from that quarter, and on the other directly and manifestly to Concord River, which is lower, by a similar chain of ponds through which in some other geological period it may have flowed, and by a little digging, which God forbid, it can be made to flow thither again. If by living thus reserved and austere, like a hermit in the woods, so long, it has acquired such wonderful purity, who would not regret that the comparatively impure waters of Flint's Pond should be mingled with it, or itself should ever go to waste its sweetness in the ocean wave?

Flint's, or Sandy Pond, in Lincoln, our greatest

arranged by Thoreau, and was never brought into order. He told me in his last illness that he had destroyed many verses because they did not please Emerson, — a loss which he then regretted. "Perhaps they were better than he thought them," said he, regretfully. This poem was highly praised by Emerson. "It suggests Simonides," he said, "but is better than Simonides." — F. B. S.

lake and inland sea, lies about a mile east of Walden. It is much larger, being said to contain one hundred and ninety-seven acres, and is more fertile in fish; but it is comparatively shallow, and not remarkably pure. A walk through the woods thither by such paths as the Indians used was often my recreation. It was worth the while, if only to feel the wind blow on your cheek freely, and see the waves run, and remember the life of mariners.

I went a-chestnutting there in the fall, on windy days, when the nuts were dropping into the water and were washed to my feet; and one day, as I crept along its sedgy shore, the fresh spray blowing in my face, I came upon the mouldering wreck of a boat, the sides gone, and hardly more than the impression of its flat bottom left amid the rushes; yet its model was sharply defined, as if it were a large decayed pad, with its veins. It was as impressive a wreck as one could imagine on the sea-shore, and had as good a moral as if it had been the Spanish Galleon with its treasures on the sea-coast. It is by this time mere vegetable mould and undistinguishable pond shore, through which rushes and flags have pushed up. I used to admire the ripple marks on the sandy bottom, at the north end of this pond, made firm and hard to the feet of the wader by the pressure of the water, and the rushes which grew in Indian file, in waving lines, corresponding to these marks, rank behind rank, as if the waves had planted them.

There also I have found, in considerable quantities, curious balls, composed apparently of fine

grass or roots, of pipewort perhaps, from half an inch to four inches in diameter, and perfectly spherical. These wash back and forth in shallow water on a sandy bottom, and are sometimes cast up on the shore. At first sight you would take them to be the nests of mice, but they are either solid grass or have a little sand in the middle. It next occurred to me that they were formed by the action of the waves, like a pebble; but the discovery of the smallest, made of equally coarse materials, half an inch long, and the fact that they are produced only at one season of the year made me relinquish this opinion. Moreover, the waves, I suspect, do not so much construct as wear down a material which has already acquired consistency. They preserve their form when dry for an indefinite period. No naturalist to whom I have shown them can give a satisfactory account of them.

The high land beyond the pond affords a memorable view of it and the forest westward to the mountains in the horizon — a more complete and exensive forest view than can be got from the summit of Monadnock. According to Shepard's *Clear Sunshine of the Gospel*, the praying Indians wished to make a town on this very spot, — " the east side of Mr. Flint's pond," in 1647, before they finally settled at Nagog Pond on the west of Concord.

Flint's Pond! Such is the poverty of our nomenclature. What right had the unclean and stupid farmer, whose farm abutted on this sky water, whose shores he has ruthlessly laid bare, to give his name to it? Some skinflint, who loved

better the reflecting surface of a dollar, or a bright cent, in which he could see his own brazen face; who regarded even the wild ducks which settled in it as trespassers; his fingers grown into crooked and horny talons from the long habit of grasping harpy-like; — so it is not named for me. I go not there to see him nor to hear of him; who never *saw* it, who never bathed in it, who never loved it, who never protected it, who never spoke a good word of it, nor thanked God that He had made it. Rather let it be named from the fishes that swim in it, the wild fowl or quadrupeds which frequent it, the wild flowers which grow by its shores, or some wild man or child the thread of whose history is interwoven with its own; not from him who could show no title to it but the deed which a like-minded neighbor or legislature gave him — him who thought only of its money value; whose presence perchance cursed all the shore; who exhausted the land around it, and would fain have exhausted the waters within it; who regretted only that it was not English hay or cranberry meadow — there was nothing to redeem it, forsooth, in his eyes — and would have drained and sold it for the mud at its bottom. It did not turn his mill, and it was no *privilege* to him to behold it. I respect not his labors, his farm where everything has its price, who would carry the landscape, who would carry his god to market, if he could get anything for him; who goes to market *for* his god as it is; on whose farm nothing grows free, whose fields bear no crops, whose meadows no flowers, whose trees no fruits, but dollars; who loves not the beauty of his fruits,

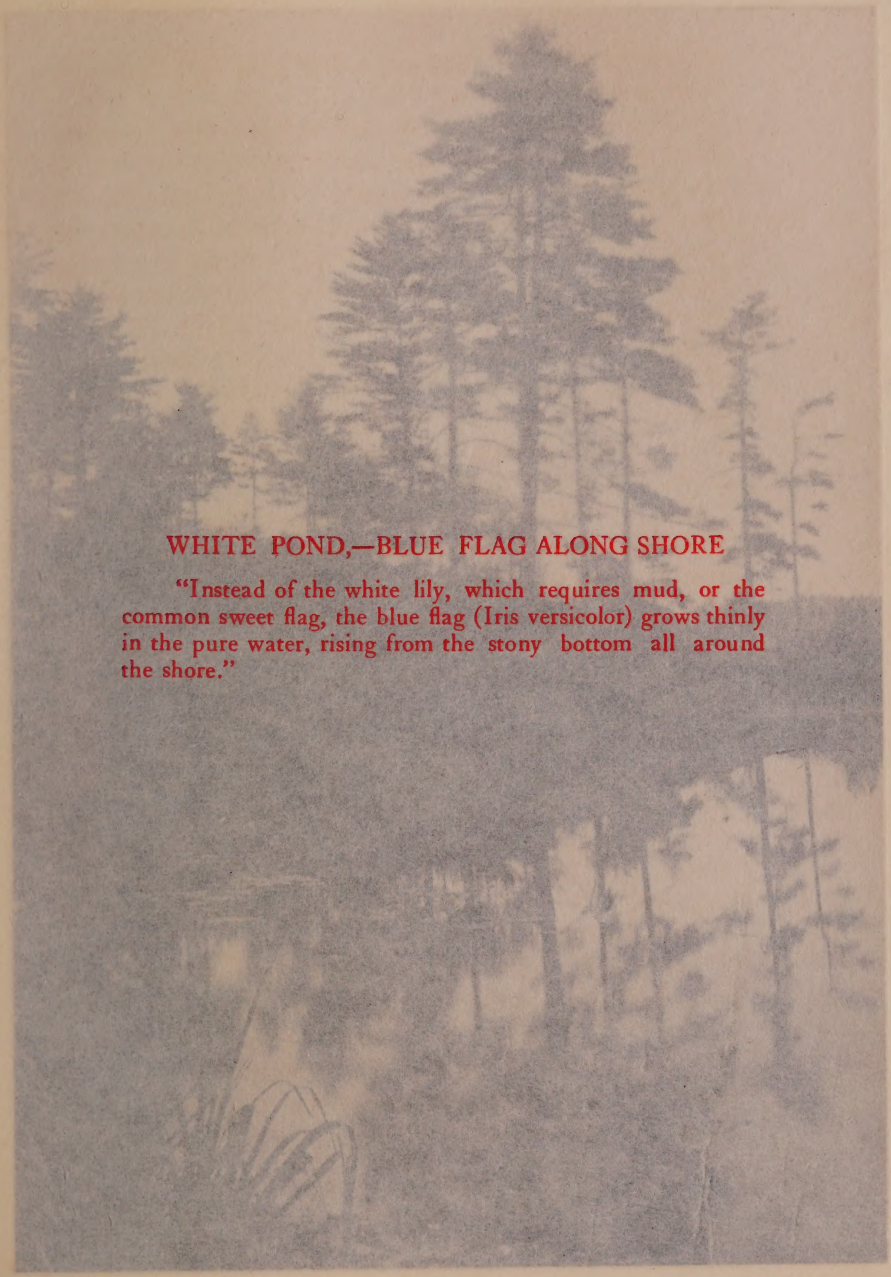
whose fruits are not ripe for him till they are turned to dollars.

Give me the poverty that enjoys true wealth. Farmers are respectable and interesting to me in proportion as they are poor, — poor farmers. A model farm! where the house stands like a fungus in a muck-heap, chambers for men, horses, oxen, and swine, cleansed and uncleansed, all contiguous to one another! Stocked with men! A great grease-spot, redolent of manures and buttermilk! Under a high state of cultivation, being manured with the hearts and brains of men! As if you were to raise your potatoes in the churchyard! Such is a model farm.

No, no; if the fairest features of the landscape are to be named after men, let them be the noblest and worthiest men alone. Let our lakes receive as true names at least as the Icarian Sea, where "still the shore" a "brave attempt resounds."

Goose Pond, of small extent, is on my way to Flint's. Fair Haven, an expansion of Concord River, said to contain seventy acres, is a mile south-west; and White Pond, of about forty acres, is a mile and a half beyond Fair Haven. This is my lake country. These, with Concord River, are my water privileges; and night and day, year in year out, they grind such grist as I carry to them.

Since the wood-cutters, and the railroad, and I myself have profaned Walden, perhaps the most attractive, if not the most beautiful, of all our lakes, the gem of the woods, is White Pond; — a poor name from its commonness, whether derived from the remarkable purity of its waters or the



WHITE POND,—BLUE FLAG ALONG SHORE

"Instead of the white lily, which requires mud, or the common sweet flag, the blue flag (Iris versicolor) grows thinly in the pure water, rising from the stony bottom all around the shore."

WHITE POND,—BLUE FLAG ALONG SHORE

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color of its sands. In these as in other respects, however, it is a lesser twin of Walden. They are so much alike that you would say they must be connected under ground. It has the same stony shore, and its waters are of the same hue.

As at Walden, in sultry dog-day weather, looking down through the woods on some of its bays which are not so deep but that the reflection from the bottom tinges them, its waters are of a misty bluish-green or glaucous color. Many years since I used to go there to collect the sand by cart-loads, to make sand-paper with, and I have continued to visit it ever since. One who frequents it proposes to call it Virid Lake. Perhaps it might be called Yellow-Pine Lake, from the following circumstance. About fifteen years ago you could see the top of a pitch-pine, of the kind called yellow-pine hereabouts, though it is not a distinct species, projecting above the surface in deep water, many rods from the shore. It was even supposed by some that the pond had sunk, and this was one of the primitive forest that formerly stood there.

I find that even so long ago as 1792, in a *Topographical Description of the Town of Concord*, by one of its citizens, in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the author, after speaking of Walden and White Ponds, adds: "In the middle of the latter may be seen, when the water is very low, a tree which appears as if it grew in the place where it now stands, although the roots are fifty feet below the surface of the water; the top of this tree is broken off, and at that place measures fourteen inches in diameter." In the spring of '49 I talked with a

man who lived nearest the pond in Sudbury, who told me that it was he who got out this tree ten or fifteen years before. As near as he could remember, it stood twelve or fifteen rods from the shore, where the water was thirty or forty feet deep. It was in the winter, and he had been getting out ice in the forenoon, and had resolved that in the afternoon, with the aid of his neighbors, he would take out the old yellow-pine. He sawed a channel in the ice toward the shore, and hauled it over and along and out on to the ice with oxen; but, before he had gone far in his work, he was surprised to find that it was wrong end upward, with the stumps of the branches pointing down, and the small end firmly fastened in the sandy bottom. It was about a foot in diameter at the big end, and he had expected to get a good saw-log, but it was so rotten as to be fit only for fuel, if for that. He had some of it in his shed then. There were marks of an axe and of woodpeckers on the butt. He thought that it might have been a dead tree on the shore, but was finally blown over into the pond, and after the top had become water-logged, while the butt-end was still dry and light, had drifted out and sunk wrong end up. His father, eighty years old, could not remember when it was not there. Several pretty large logs may still be seen lying on the bottom, where, owing to the undulation of the surface, they look like huge water snakes in motion.

This pond has rarely been profaned by a boat, for there is little in it to tempt a fisherman. Instead of the white lily, which requires mud, or the common sweet flag, the blue flag (*Iris versicolor*)

grows thinly in the pure water, rising from the stony bottom all around the shore, where it is visited by humming-birds in June; and the color both of its bluish blades and its flowers, and especially their reflections, are in singular harmony with the glaucous water.

White Pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light. If they were permanently congealed, and small enough to be clutched, they would, perchance, be carried off by slaves, like precious stones, to adorn the heads of emperors; none would come here to wash for liberty's sake; but being liquid, and ample, and secured to us and our successors forever, we disregard them, and run after the diamond of Kohinoor. They are too pure to have a market value; they contain no muck. How much more beautiful than our lives, how much more transparent than our characters, are they! We never learned meanness of them. How much fairer than the pool before the farmer's door, in which his ducks swim! Hither the clean wild ducks come. Nature has no human inhabitant who appreciates her. The birds with their plumage and their notes are in harmony with the flowers and lakes, but what youth or maiden conspires with the wild luxuriant beauty of Nature? She flourishes most alone, far from the towns where they reside. Talk of heaven! ye disgrace earth.

CHAPTER X—BAKER FARM AND PHILANTHROPY

SOMETIMES I rambled to pine groves, standing like temples, or like fleets at sea, full-rigged, with wavy boughs, and rippling with light, so soft and green and shady that the Druids would have forsaken their oaks to worship in them; or to the cedar wood beyond Flint's Pond, where the trees, covered with hoary blue berries, spiring higher and higher, are fit to stand before Valhalla, and the creeping juniper covers the ground with wreaths full of fruit; or to swamps where the usnea lichen hangs in festoons from the white-spruce trees, and toadstools, round tables of the swamp gods, cover the ground, and more beautiful fungi adorn the stumps, like butterflies or shells, vegetable winkles covering the dead wood like barnacles; where the swamp-pink and dogwood grow, the red alder-berry glows like eyes of imps, the waxwork grooves and crushes the hardest woods in its folds, and the wild-holly berries make the beholder forget his home with their beauty, where the owl hides her young and nods at noon-day, and the raccoon has his perch, and you are dazzled and tempted by nameless other wild forbidden fruits, too fair for mortal taste.

Instead of calling on some scholar, I paid many

a visit to particular trees, of kinds which are rare in this neighborhood, standing far away in the middle of some pasture, or in the depths of a wood or swamp, or on a hill-top; such as the black-birch, of which we have some handsome specimens two feet in diameter; its cousin, the yellow-birch, with its loose golden vest, perfumed like the first; the beech, which has so neat a bole and beautifully lichen-painted, perfect in all its details, of which, excepting scattered specimens, I know of but one small grove of sizable trees left in Concord, supposed by some to have been planted by the pigeons that were once baited with beechnuts near by; it is worth the while to see the silver grain sparkle when you split this wood; the bass; the hornbeam; the *Celtis occidentalis*, or false elm, of which we have but one well-grown; some taller mast of a pine, a shingle tree, or a more perfect hemlock than usual, standing like a pagoda in the midst of the woods; and many others I could mention. These were the shrines I visited both summer and winter.

Once it chanced that I stood in the very abutment of a rainbow's arch, which filled the lower stratum of the atmosphere, tingeing the grass and leaves around, and dazzling me as if I looked through colored crystal. It was a lake of rainbow light, in which, for a short while, I lived like a dolphin. If it had lasted longer it might have tinged my employments and life.

As I walked on the railroad causeway, I used to wonder at the halo of light around my shadow, and would fain fancy myself one of the elect,

until I heard of another who had observed the same phenomenon — which indeed is a constant one — affecting himself. But even he thought that the shadows of some Irishmen before him had no halo about them, that it was only natives that were so distinguished.

Benvenuto Cellini tells us in his memoirs, that, after a certain terrible dream or vision which he had during his confinement in the castle of St. Angelo, a resplendent light appeared over the shadow of his head at morning and evening, whether he was in Italy or France, and it was particularly conspicuous when the grass was moist with dew. This was probably the same phenomenon to which I have referred, which is especially observed in the morning, but also at other times, and even by moonlight. Though a constant one, it is not commonly noticed, and, in the case of an excitable imagination like Cellini's, it would be basis enough for superstition. Besides, he tells us that he showed it to very few. But are they not indeed distinguished who are conscious that they are regarded at all?

I set out one afternoon to go a-fishing to Fair-Haven, through the woods, to eke out my scanty fare of vegetables. My way led through Pleasant Meadow, an adjunct of the Baker Farm, that retreat of which a poet has since sung,[1] beginning —

[1] The poet quoted on this page was Ellery Channing, who in his third volume of verse, published in 1849, printed a poem in irregular measure, "Baker Farm," and thus perpetuated the local name of this field and cottage

Thy entry is a pleasant field,
Which some mossy fruit trees yield,
Partly to a ruddy brook,
By gliding musquash undertook,
And mercurial trout,
Darting about.

I thought of living there before I went to Walden. I "hooked" the apples, leaped the

near Fair Haven Bay, which is now included in the estate of Mr. C. F. Adams, near the railroad station of "Baker Bridge." In the "Walden" years and for long after, it was the lonely and retired spot described by Channing and Thoreau, but much frequented by the "Walkers," as Emerson, Thoreau, and Channing called themselves, from their habit of spending some part of each day in rambling among the Concord woods and fields.

Thoreau cites some of the best lines in Channing's poem; but among the MSS. left me by Channing were other stanzas not printed, which carry the fanciful thought of the poem a degree or two further. This fuller form of the verses appears at the end of Channing's *Thoreau the Poet-Naturalist* (revised edition of 1902), among the "Memorial Verses" (pp. 370–373). At the end of the stanza cited by Thoreau, "Come ye who love," etc., these lines now stand, illustrating the extreme of the unfrequented, —

One at a time, —
  That is enough;
Two will not rhyme,
  But make the roadway rough;
One at a time,
With interspace sublime, —
Before each of you go
A century or so.

I was escorted to this "cell of seclusion" by Emerson himself, very early in my first Concord residence (1855) when not only the cabin, but the barn and "forked orchard" were standing, — all long since gone. — F. B. S.

brook, and scared the musquash and the trout. It was one of those afternoons which seem indefinitely long before one, in which many events may happen, a large portion of our natural life, though it was already half spent when I started. By the way there came up a shower, which compelled me to stand half an hour under a pine, piling boughs over my head, and wearing my handkerchief for a shed; and when at length I had made one cast over the pickerel-weed, standing up to my middle in water, I found myself suddenly in the shadow of a cloud, and the thunder began to rumble with such emphasis that I could do no more than listen to it. The gods must be proud, thought I, with such forked flashes to rout a poor unarmed fisherman. So I made haste for shelter to the nearest hut, which stood half a mile from any road, but so much the nearer to the pond, and had long been uninhabited: —

> "And here a poet builded,
> In the completed years,
> For behold a trivial cabin
> That to destruction steers."

So the Muse fables. But therein, as I found, dwelt now John Field, an Irishman, and his wife, and several children, — from the broad-faced boy who assisted his father at his work, and now came running by his side from the bog to escape the rain, — to the wrinkled, sibyl-like, cone-headed infant that sat upon its father's knee as in the palaces of nobles, and looked out from its home in the midst of wet and hunger inquisitively upon the stranger, with the privilege of

infancy, not knowing but it was the last of a noble line, and the hope and cynosure of the world, instead of John Field's poor starveling brat. There we sat together under that part of the roof which leaked the least, while it showered and thundered without. I had sat there many times of old before the ship was built that floated this family to America.

An honest, hard-working, but shiftless man plainly was John Field; and his wife — she too was brave to cook so many successive dinners in the recesses of that lofty stove; with round greasy face and bare breast, still thinking to improve her condition one day; with the never-absent mop in one hand, and yet no effects of it visible anywhere. The chickens, which had also taken shelter here from the rain, stalked about the room like members of the family, too humanized methought to roast well. They stood and looked in my eye or pecked at my shoe significantly. Meanwhile my host told me his story, how hard he worked "bogging" for a neighboring farmer, turning up a meadow with a spade or bog hoe at the rate of ten dollars an acre, and the use of the land with manure for one year, and his little broad-faced son worked cheerfully at his father's side the while, not knowing how poor a bargain the latter had made. I tried to help him with my experience, telling him that he was one of my nearest neighbors, and that I, too, who came a-fishing here, and looked like a loafer, was getting my living like himself; that I lived in a tight, light, and clean house, which hardly cost more than the annual rent of such a

ruin as his commonly amounts to; and how, if he chose, he might in a month or two build himself a palace of his own; that I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them; again, as I did not work hard, I did not have to eat hard, and it cost me but a trifle for my food; but as he began with tea, and coffee, and butter, and milk, and beef, he had to work hard to pay for them, and when he had worked hard he had to eat hard again to repair the waste of his system, — and so it was as broad as it was long, indeed it was broader than it was long, for he was discontented and wasted his life into the bargain; and yet he had rated it as a gain in coming to America, that here you could get tea, and coffee, and meat every day. But the only true America is that country where you are at liberty to pursue such a mode of life as may enable you to do without these, and where the state does not endeavor to compel you to sustain the slavery and war and other superfluous expenses which directly or indirectly result from the use of such things. For I purposely talked to him as if he were a philosopher, or desired to be one.

I should be glad if all the meadows on the earth were left in a wild state, if that were the consequence of men's beginning to redeem themselves. A man will not need to study history to find out what is best for his own culture. But alas! the culture of an Irishman is an enterprise to be undertaken with a sort of moral bog hoe. I told him, that as he worked so hard at bogging, he required thick boots and stout clothing,

which yet were soon soiled and worn out, but I wore light shoes and thin clothing, which cost not half so much, though he might think that I was dressed like a gentleman (which, however, was not the case), and in an hour or two, without labor, but as a recreation, I could, if I wished, catch as many fish as I should want for two days, or earn enough money to support me a week. If he and his family would live simply, they might all go a-huckleberrying in the summer for their amusement. John heaved a sigh at this, and his wife stared, with arms akimbo, and both appeared to be wondering if they had capital enough to begin such a course with, or arithmetic enough to carry it through. It was sailing by dead reckoning to them, and they saw not clearly how to make their port so; therefore, I suppose they still take life bravely, after their fashion, face to face, giving it tooth and nail, not having skill to split its massive columns with any fine entering wedge, and rout it in detail — thinking to deal with it roughly, as one should handle a thistle. But they fight at an overwhelming disadvantage — living, John Field,[1] alas! without arithmetic, and failing so.

"Do you ever fish?" I asked. "Oh yes, I catch a mess now and then when I am lying by; good perch I catch." "What 's your bait?" "I catch shiners with fish-worms, and bait the perch with them." "You 'd better go now, John," said his

[1] This seems to be a real name, as it stands also in the Journal for Saturday, August 23, 1845. "John Farmer," "Spaulding," etc., in *Walden* are fictitious names. — F. B. S.

wife with glistening and hopeful face; but John demurred.

The shower was now over, and a rainbow above the eastern woods promised a fair evening; so I took my departure. When I had got without I asked for a dish, hoping to get a sight of the well bottom, to complete my survey of the premises; but there, alas! are shallows and quicksands, and rope broken withal, and bucket irrecoverable. Meanwhile the right culinary vessel was selected, water was seemingly distilled, and at length after consultation and long delay passed out to the thirsty one — not yet suffered to cool, nor yet to settle. Such gruel sustains life here, I thought; so, shutting my eyes, and excluding the motes by a skilfully directed undercurrent, I drank to genuine hospitality the heartiest draught I could! I am not squeamish in such cases when manners are concerned.

As I was leaving the Irishman's roof after the rain, bending my steps again to the Pond, my haste to catch pickerel, wading in retired meadows, in sloughs and bog-holes, in forlorn and savage places, appeared for an instant trivial to me who had been sent to school and college; but as I ran down the hill toward the reddening west, with the rainbow over my shoulder, and some faint tinkling sounds borne to my ear through the cleansed air, from I know not what quarter, my Good Genius seemed to say[1] — Go fish and hunt far and wide day by day — farther and wider — and rest thee by many brooks and hearth-sides without misgiving.

[1] See footnote (*a*) at end of chapter, p. 84.

Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures. Let the noon find thee by other lakes, and the night overtake thee everywhere at home. There are no larger fields than these, no worthier games than may here be played. Grow wild according to thy nature, like these sedges and brakes, which will never become English hay. Let the thunder rumble; what if it threaten ruin to farmers' crops? that is not its errand to thee. Take shelter under the cloud, while they flee to carts and sheds. Let not to get a living be thy trade, but thy sport. Enjoy the land, but own it not. Through want of enterprise and faith men are where they are, buying and selling, and spending their lives like serfs.

O Baker Farm!

> "Landscape where the richest element
> Is a little sunshine innocent."

> "No one runs to revel
> On thy rail-fenced lea."

> "Debate with no man hast thou,
> With questions art never perplexed,
> As tame at the first sight as now,
> In thy plain russet gabardine dressed."

> "Come ye who love,
> And ye who hate,
> Children of the Holy Dove,
> And Guy Faux of the state,
> And hang conspiracies
> From the tough rafters of the trees!"

Men come tamely home at night only from the next field or street, where their household echoes haunt, and their life pines because it breathes its own breath over again; their shadows morning and evening reach farther than their daily steps. We should come home from far, from adventures, and perils, and discoveries every day, with new experience and character.

Before I had reached the pond some fresh impulse had brought out John Field, with altered mind, letting go "bogging" ere this sunset. But he, poor man, disturbed only a couple of fins while I was catching a fair string, and he said it was his luck; but when we changed seats in the boat luck changed seats too. Poor John Field! — I trust he does not read this, unless he will improve by it, — thinking to live by some derivative old country mode in this primitive new country — to catch perch with shiners. It is good bait sometimes, I allow. With his horizon all his own, yet he a poor man, born to be poor, with his inherited Irish poverty or poor life, his Adam's grandmother and boggy ways, not to rise in this world, he nor his posterity, till their wading, webbed, bog-trotting feet get *talaria* to their heels.

What does all the charity of England amount to, who with her right hand withholds the soil and freedom from the masses, and with her left builds workhouses, and does not let her left hand know what her right hand does?

Philanthropy is almost the only virtue which is sufficiently appreciated by mankind. Nay, it

is greatly overrated; and it is our selfishness which overrates it. A robust poor man, one sunny day here in Concord, praised a fellow-townsman to me, because, as he said, he was kind to the poor; meaning himself. The kind uncles and aunts of the race are more esteemed than its true spiritual fathers and mothers. I once heard a reverend lecturer on England, a man of learning and intelligence, after enumerating her scientific, literary, and political worthies, Shakespeare, Bacon, Cromwell, Milton, Newton, and others, speak next of her Christian heroes, whom, as if his profession required it of him, he elevated to a place far above all the rest, as the greatest of the great. They were Penn, Howard, and Mrs. Fry. Every one must feel the falsehood and cant of this. The last were not England's best men and women; only, perhaps, her best philanthropists.

I would not subtract anything from the praise that is due to philanthropy, but merely demand justice for the bard, the hero, the saint, and all who by their lives and works are a blessing to mankind. I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. Those plants of whose greenness withered we make herb tea for the sick, serve but a humble use and are most employed by quacks. I want the flower and fruit of a man; that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavor our intercourse. His goodness must not be a partial and transitory act, but a constant superfluity, which costs him nothing, and of which he is

unconscious. This is a charity that hides a multitude of sins.[1]

The philanthropist too often surrounds mankind with the remembrance of his own cast-off griefs as an atmosphere, and calls it sympathy. We should impart our courage, and not our despair, our health and ease, and not our disease, — and take care that this does not spread by contagion. From what Southern plain comes up the voice of wailing? Under what latitudes reside the heathen to whom we would send light? Who is that intemperate and brutal man whom we would redeem? If anything ail a man, so that he does not perform his functions, — if he have a pain in his bowels even (for that is the seat of sympathy), he forthwith sets about reforming, — the world! Being a microcosm himself, he discovers, — and it is a true discovery, and he is the man to make it, — that the world

[1] This thoughtful and abstruse passage was several times re-written by Thoreau. In one draft it stands thus: — "He must serve another and a better use than any he can consciously render. We demand to discover at least some signs of life, — some vegetation and putting forth of natural life in him; some greenness, some flowering, some ripeness. He must be a sort of appreciable wealth to us, — or at least make us sensible of our own riches. In his degree an Apollo, a Mercury, a Minerva, — the bearer of divine gifts to me, — he must bring me the morning light untarnished, and the evening red undimmed. The hilarity of Spring in his mirth, the Summer serenity in his joy; the Autumnal ripeness in his wisdom, and the repose and abundance of Winter in his silence." — F. B. S.

has been eating green apples; to his eyes, in fact, the globe itself is a great green apple, which there is danger (awful to think of) that the children of men will nibble before it is ripe; and straightway his drastic philanthropy seeks out the Esquimau and the Patagonian, and embraces the populous Indian and Chinese villages; and thus, by a few years of philanthropic activity, — the Powers in the mean while using him for their own ends, no doubt, — he cures himself of his dyspepsia. The globe acquires a faint blush on one or both of its cheeks, as if it were beginning to be ripe; and life loses its crudity and is once more sweet and wholesome to live.

I never dreamed of any enormity greater than I have committed. I never knew, and never shall know a worse man than myself. I believe that what so saddens the reformer is not his sympathy with his fellows in distress, but (though he be the holiest son of God) is his private ail. Let this be righted, — let the Spring come to him, the morning rise over his couch, and he will forsake his generous companions without apology.

My excuse for not lecturing against the use of tobacco is, that I never chewed it. That is a penalty which reformed tobacco-chewers have to pay. Though there are things enough I have chewed that I could lecture against. If you should ever be betrayed into any of these philanthropies, do not let your left hand know what your right hand does, — for it is not worth knowing, — keep dark about it. That was excellent advice; for comparatively, — comparatively, I say, — it is a deed of darkness, and will not con-

stitute you a child of light. Rescue the drowning, and tie your shoestrings. Take your time, and set about some free labor.

At doing something, — I will not engage that my neighbors shall pronounce it good, — I do not hesitate to say that I should be a capital fellow to hire; but what that is, is for my employer to find out. What *good* I do, in the common sense of that word, must be aside from my main path, and for the most part wholly unintended. Men say, practically, "Begin where you are and such as you are, without aiming to become of more worth, and with kindness aforethought go about doing good." If I were to preach at all in this strain, I should say rather, "Set about *being* good."

As if the sun should stop when he had kindled his fires up to the splendor of a moon, or a star of the sixth magnitude, and go about like a Robin Goodfellow, peeping in at every cottage window, inspiring lunatics, and tainting meats, and making darkness visible, instead of steadily increasing his genial heat and beneficence till he is of such brightness that no mortal can look him in the face; and then, and in the meanwhile too, going about the world in his own orbit, doing it good, — or rather, as a truer philosophy has discovered, — the world going about him, getting good.

When Phaeton, wishing to prove his heavenly birth by his beneficence, had the sun's chariot but one day, and drove out of the beaten track, he burned several blocks of houses in the lower streets of heaven, and scorched the surface of

the earth, and dried up every spring, and made the great desert of Sahara; till at length Jupiter hurled him headlong to the earth with a thunderbolt, and the sun, through grief at his death, did not shine for a year.

There is no odor so bad as that which arises from goodness tainted. It is human, it is divine carrion. If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with a conscious design of doing me good (such a man as I have seen on this errand), I should run for my life, as from that dry and parching wind of the African deserts, called the Simoon, which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust, till you are suffocated; for fear I should get some of his good done to me, — some of its virus mingled with my blood. No, — in this case I would rather suffer evil in the natural way.

There are two kinds of good, — the one done to the body, the other to the inhabitant of the body. Mankind insist almost exclusively on the former. But a man is not a good *man* to me because he will feed me if I should be starving, or warm me if I should be freezing, or pull me out of a ditch if I should ever fall into one. I can find you a Newfoundland dog that will do as much.

Philanthropy is not love for one's fellow-man in the broadest sense. Howard was, no doubt, an exceedingly kind and worthy man in his way, and has his reward; but, comparatively speaking, what are a hundred Howards to *us*, if their philanthropy does not help *us* in our best estate, when we are most worthy to be helped? if their

presence, their conversation, their lives do not satisfy the hunger which is now starving us, — do not banish the cold which is freezing us, — do not help us in our better state, to liberate us from the prison in which we are all confined? Alas! I never heard of a philanthropic meeting in which it was sincerely proposed to do any good to me, or the like of me. But every dog should have his day. I am far from supposing that my case is a peculiar one; no doubt many of my readers would make a similar defence.

The Jesuits were quite balked by those Indians who, being burned at the stake, suggested new modes of torture to their tormentors. Being superior to physical suffering, it sometimes chanced that they were superior to any consolation which the missionaries could offer; and the law "to do as you would be done by" fell with less persuasiveness on the ears of those who, for their part, did not care how they were done by; who loved their enemies after a new fashion, and came near freely forgiving them all they did.[1]

Be sure that you give the poor the aid they most need, though it be your example which leaves them far behind. If you give money, spend yourself with it, and do not merely abandon it to them. We make curious mistakes sometimes. Often the poor man is not so cold and hungry as he is dirty and ragged and gross. It is partly his taste, and not merely his misfortune.

[1] See footnote (*b*) at end of chapter, p. 86.

If you give him money, he will perhaps buy more rags with it.

I was wont to pity the clumsy Irish laborers who cut ice on the pond, in such mean and ragged clothes, while I shivered in my more tidy and somewhat more fashionable garments; till, one bitter cold day, one who had slipped into the water came to my house to warm him, and I saw him strip off three pairs of "pants" and two pairs of stockings, ere he got down to the skin, though they were dirty and ragged enough, it is true, — and that he could afford to refuse the *extra* garments which I offered him, he had so many *intra* ones. This ducking was the very thing he needed. Then I began to pity *myself*, and I saw that it would be a greater charity to bestow on me a flannel shirt than a whole slop-shop on him.

There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root; and it may be that he who bestows the largest amount of time and money on the needy, is doing the most by his mode of life to produce that misery which he strives in vain to relieve. It is the pious slave-breeder devoting the proceeds of every tenth slave to buy a Sunday's liberty for the rest. Some show their kindness to the poor by employing them in their kitchens. Would they not be kinder if they employed themselves there? You boast of spending a tenth part of your income in charity; maybe you should spend the nine tenths so, and done with it. Society recovers only a tenth part of the property then. Is this owing to the generosity of him in whose possession it

is found, or to the remissness of the officers of justice?[1]

[1] The bulk of Thoreau's peculiar view of Philanthropy has been transferred from the long Chapter II on Economy, where it hardly belonged, to the comments on the poor Irish family at Baker Farm, to which it has much pertinence. As many philosophers do not follow their own precepts, so, in Thoreau's case, he was among the most benevolent to the really poor in his native town. These were, at that period, the newly imported Irish laborers employed in building the Fitchburg Railroad, in the ruder toil of the farms, and in other ill-paid employments. It was the time of the Irish famine of 1846–47, when the diseased as well as the healthy peasants came over in great numbers. To some of these Thoreau was for years helpful and considerate. One man, a skilful spade-laborer, when defrauded, as Thoreau thought, by his employer of a few dollars rightfully belonging to the poor man, received the amount from Thoreau, who had raised it by subscription. This man was long employed by Thoreau and Channing, and when I reached Concord in 1855, I received him as a transmittendum from them. Sophia Thoreau died, in 1876, a creditor of this man, Michael Flannery, for money lent. — F. B. S.

(*a*) This fine passage, extremely characteristic of Thoreau in Walden period, stands in the MS. very differently from its first form in the Journal for Saturday afternoon, August 23, the first summer at Walden; and fuller than in the printed editions. In the original Journal it begins, —

"When on my way this afternoon, — 'Shall I go down this long hill in the rain to fish in the pond?' I ask myself. And I say to myself, — 'Yes, roam far, grasp life and conquer it; learn much and live. Your fetters are knocked off; you are really free. Stay till late in the night; be unwise and daring,'" etc.; while in the MS. at hand it reads, —

"Again I remember, as I was leaving the Irishman's

roof after the rain, and bending my steps again to the shore of the lake, — my haste to catch pickerel, wading in retired meadows, in sloughs and bog-holes, in retired and savage places, — seemed for an instant trivial to me who had been sent to school and college. But then, in an instant, my Genius said, from the western heaven, — 'Go fish and hunt far and wide, day by day; and rest thee by many hearthsides without misgiving! Rise free from care before the dawn, and seek adventures! Let the noon find thee by other brooks and the night overtake thee always at home! Lead such a life as the children that chase butterflies in the meadow. There are no larger fields than these, no nobler games, no more extended earth. With thy life uninsured, live free, and forever as you were planted. Grow wild according to Nature, like these ferns and brakes, which study not morals nor philosophy, nor strive to become a cultivated grass for cattle to eat, — like these bulrushes behind which you see the reddening sky over the lake, as if they were the masts of vessels in a crowded Venice harbor. Let the thunder rumble in thy own tongue; what if it brings rain to farmers' crops? that is not its errand to thee. Take shelter under the cloud, while others fly to carts and sheds. Enjoy thy dominion; and waive men, the fowl and the quadruped, and all creeping things. Seek without toil thy daily food; thy sustenance, is it not in Nature? Through want of confidence in the gods, men are where they are, — buying and selling, owning land, following trade, — and spending their lives ignobly."

This is likewise in accord with an omitted passage earlier in the MS., —

"A man must find his occasion in himself. The natural day is very calm, and will hardly reprove his indolence. Man is still like a plant, and his satisfactions are like those of a vegetable. His rarest life is least his own."

Again he says, in another omitted passage, —

"My life was a drama of many scenes, and without an end. If we were always, indeed, getting our living, and regulating our lives according to the last and divinest modes we had learned, we should never be weary of liv-

ing. Follow your Genius closely enough, and it will not fail to show you a fresh prospect every hour. If men would steadily observe realities only, and not allow themselves to be deluded, life would be like a fairy tale and the Arabian Nights' Entertainments. If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets. When we are calm and wise and unhurried, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence."

The reverse of this thought also appears in an earlier omitted passage, —

"When there is no elevation in my spirit, the Pond does not seem elevated like a mountain tarn, — but a low pool, a silent muddy water and a place for fishermen." — F. B. S.

(*b*) Thoreau does not seem to have been quite satisfied with his searching criticism of Philanthropy as it was printed; for we find in the MSS. many expansive variations of passages, one of which is here given separately: —

"Every class and order in the universe is the bearer of certain gifts to man. There is a whole class of musk-bearing animals, and each flower has its peculiar odor; and all these together go to make the general wholesome and invigorating atmosphere. So each man should take care to emit his fragrance, and perform some such office as hemlock boughs, and dried and healing herbs. I want the flower and fruit of a man, — that some fragrance, as of fresh spring life, be wafted over from him to me. This is consolation, and that charity which hides a multitude of sins.

"A man should impart his courage and not his despair; his health and ease, and not his disease, — and take care that this does not spread by contagion. It has been well said that our purest and loftiest joys have no memory or faith in one another; and hence we need that he of our fellows who last travelled to the sources of the sun, drank at the well of life, or tasted the fountain of God, should communicate to us some of his inspiration.

"If we will think of it, there is no reformer on the globe, — no such philanthropic, benevolent, charitable man now engaged in any good work anywhere, — sorely afflicted by the sight of misery around him, and animated by the desire to relieve it, — who would not instantly, and unconsciously, sign off from these pure labors and betake himself to purer, if he had but righted some obscure and perhaps unrecognized private grievance. Let but the Spring come to him, — let but the Morning rise over his couch, — and he will forsake his generous companions without apology or explanation, — or the need of any."

This broad statement needed some explanation. But it may be remembered that Thoreau was thinking and writing on the high mystical plane of the Inner Light, — and not upon any immediate, practical relations of charity to affliction. — F. B. S.

CHAPTER XI — HIGHER LAWS

As I came home through the woods with my string of fish, trailing my pole, — it being now quite dark, — I caught a glimpse of a woodchuck stealing across my path, and felt a strange thrill of savage delight, and was strongly tempted to seize and devour him raw; not that I was hungry then, except for that wildness which he represented. Once or twice, however, while I lived at the pond, I found myself ranging the woods, like a half-starved hound, with a strange abandonment, seeking some kind of venison which I might devour, and no morsel could have been too savage for me. The wildest scenes had become unaccountably familiar.

I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life (I used this word with limitations, because, though we have the idea, we have not the reality), as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and savage one, and I reverence them both. Some would say that the one impulse was directly from God, and the other through Nature. I love the wild not less than the good.

The wildness and adventure that are in fishing still recommend it to me. I like sometimes to take rank hold on life and spend my day more as the animals do. Perhaps I have owed to this employ-

ment and to hunting, when quite young, my closest acquaintance with Nature. They early introduced me to the wildest scenes, and detained me there. The best way to become acquainted with any scenery is to engage in some pursuit in it which harmonizes with it. Fishermen, hunters, wood-choppers, and others, spending their lives in the fields and woods, in a peculiar sense a part of Nature themselves, are often in a more favorable mood for observing her, in the intervals of their pursuits, than philosophers or poets even, who approach her with expectation. She is not afraid to exhibit herself to them.

The ramble by the river and meadow seemed sometimes incomplete and without a sufficient purpose, if I did not carry a fish-pole. The traveller on the prairie is naturally a hunter, on the head waters of the Missouri and Columbia a trapper, and at the Falls of St. Mary a fisherman. He who is only a traveller learns things at second-hand and by the halves, and is poor authority. We are most interested when science reports what those men already know practically or instinctively, for that alone is a true *humanity*, or account of human experience.

They mistake who assert that the Yankee has few amusements, because he has not so many public holidays, and men and boys do not play so many games as they do in England, for here the more primitive but solitary amusements of hunting, fishing, and the like have not yet given place to the former. Almost every New England boy among my contemporaries shouldered a fowling-piece between the ages of ten and four-

teen; and his hunting and fishing grounds were not limited like the preserves of an English nobleman, but were more boundless even than those of a savage. No wonder, then, that he did not oftener stay to play on the Common. But already a change is taking place, owing, not to an increased humanity, but to an increased scarcity of game, for perhaps the hunter is the greatest friend of the animals hunted, not excepting the Humane Society.

Distinction was made by my compeers between blackbirds and robins, and often that boy lost caste who was known to have killed one of the latter.

Moreover, when at the pond, I wished sometimes to add fish to my fare for variety. I have actually fished from the same kind of necessity that the first fishers did. Whatever humanity I might conjure up against it was all factitious, and concerned my philosophy more than my feelings. I speak of fishing only now, for I had long felt differently about fowling, and sold my gun before I went to the woods.[1] Not that I am less

[1] In an earlier journal used in compiling *The Week*, and entered there under Wednesday, September 4, 1839, but probably written some years later, Thoreau said: "There are few tools to be compared with a gun for efficiency and compactness. I do not know of another so complete an *arm*. It is almost a companion, like a dog. I have seen the time when I could carry a gun in my hand all day on a journey, and not feel it heavy, though I did not use it once. In the country a boy's love is apt to be divided between a gun and a watch; but the more active and manly choose the gun. Like the first settlers, who rarely went to the field — hardly even

humane than others, but I did not perceive that my feelings were much affected. I did not pity the fishes nor the worms. This was habit.

As for fowling, during the last years that I carried a gun my excuse was that I was studying ornithology, and sought only new or rare birds. But I confess that I am now inclined to think that there is a finer way of studying ornithology than this. It requires so much closer attention to the habits of the birds, that, if for that reason only, I have been willing to omit the gun. Yet notwithstanding the objection on the score of humanity, I am compelled to doubt if equally valuable sports are ever substituted for these; and when some of my friends have asked me anxiously about their boys, whether they should let them hunt, I have answered, yes, — remembering that it was one of the best parts of my education, — *make* them hunters, though sportsmen only at first, if possible, — mighty hunters at last, so that they shall not find game large enough for them in this or any vegetable wilderness, — hunters as well as fishers of men. Thus far I am of the opinion of Chaucer's nun [monk], who

> "yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
> That seith, that hunters been nat holy men."

There is a period in the history of the individual, as of the race, when the hunters are the "best men," as the Algonquins called them. We can-

to church — without their guns, we, their descendants, have not yet quite outgrown this habit of pioneers." — F. B. S.

not but pity the boy who has never fired a gun; he is no more humane, while his education has been sadly neglected. This was my answer with respect to those youths who were bent on this pursuit, trusting that they would soon outgrow it. No humane being, past the thoughtless age of boyhood, will wantonly murder any creature which holds its life by the same tenure that he does.[1]

The hare in its extremity cries like a child. I warn you, mothers, that my sympathies do not always make the usual phil-*anthropic* distinctions.

Such is oftenest the young man's introduction to the forest, and the most original part of himself. He goes thither at first as a hunter and fisher, until at last, if he has the seeds of a better life in him, he distinguishes his proper objects,

[1] In Goldsmith's "Hermit," which Thoreau knew and sometimes quoted, the Solitary says to his Pilgrim: —

> No flocks that range the valley free
> To slaughter I condemn;
> Taught by that Power that pities me,
> I learn to pity them:
> But from the mountain's grassy side
> A guiltless feast I bring;
> A scrip with herbs and fruits supplied,
> And water from the spring.

Neither Goldsmith nor Thoreau quite lived up to this gentle doctrine. Although less luxurious than Dr. Johnson's friend, Thoreau, as he says farther on, "was never unusually squeamish, but could sometimes eat a fried rat with a good relish if it were necessary." When I knew him first, a year after *Walden* was published, he ate at his mother's table, with me, whatever was set before us, and drank tea, if not coffee. — F. B. S.

as a poet or naturalist it may be, and leaves the gun and fish-pole behind.[1] The mass of men are still and always young in this respect.

[1] Thoreau's distaste for fishing, though he practised it occasionally afterward, may have had something to do with his unlucky experience in setting Deacon Wheeler's woods on fire, in the spring of 1844, as related by him in a passage of the Journals, long since published in the *Atlantic Monthly*. He had set out, early in April (it was Town-meeting day in the Village) with Edward Hoar, then in Harvard College (an elder brother of the late Senator Hoar), up the Sudbury river in his boat, but got no further than Fair Haven Pond, three miles southward, — for there they tarried on the eastern shore, near Baker Farm, to cook the fish they had caught for dinner. Their fire, kindled in a dry stump on the hillside, soon caught the dry grass, and in a few minutes was beyond the control of the two youths. Edward Hoar took the boat back to town by the river, while Thoreau ran two miles towards the village to alarm the people, meeting Deacon Wheeler, the owner of a hundred cords of newly cut wood, towards which the flames were hastening. The Deacon hastened to call the neighbors, and Thoreau, spent with running, returned to the highest rock on Fair Haven Cliff, a mile from the cooking-fire, and thence watched the dire conflagration, filled with shame and regret for having started it. It burned over 100 acres and destroyed much young wood, but Thoreau presently said to himself, — not, let us hope, to the dismayed and angry owners of the woodlots: "Who are these men, that are said to be the owners of these woods? and how am I related to them? I have set fire to the forest, but I have done no wrong therein; and now it is as if the lightning had done it. These flames are but consuming their natural food."

He added, in June, 1850: "It has never troubled me from that day to this more than if the lightning had done it. The trivial fishing was all that disturbed me, and disturbs me still." The farmers were greatly disturbed, and

In some countries a hunting parson is no uncommon sight. Such a one might make a good shepherd's dog, but is far from being the Good Shepherd. I have been surprised to consider that the only obvious employment, except wood-chopping, ice-cutting, or the like business, which ever to my knowledge detained at Walden Pond for a whole half day any of my fellow-citizens, whether fathers or children of the town, with just one exception, was fishing. Commonly they did not think that they were lucky, or well paid for their time, unless they got a long string of fish, though they had the opportunity of seeing the pond all the while. They might go there a thousand times before the sediment of fishing would sink to the bottom and leave their purpose pure; but no doubt such a clarifying process would be going on all the while.

The governor and his council faintly remember the pond, for they went a-fishing there when they were boys; but now they are too old and dignified to go a-fishing, and so they know it no more forever. Yet even they expect to go to heaven at last. If the legislature regards it, it is chiefly to regulate the number of hooks to be used there; but they know nothing about the hook of hooks with which to angle for the pond itself, impaling the legislature for a bait. Thus, even in civilized communities, the em-

threatened prosecution; but the fact that Squire Hoar's son, of the leading family in Concord, was in the affair, and perhaps some payment of damages by the Squire, quieted the ill-feeling, and in time the whole affair was forgotten. — F. B. S.

bryo man passes through the hunter stage of development.

I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect. I have tried it again and again. I have skill at it, and, like many of my fellows, a certain instinct for it, which revives from time to time, but always when I have done I feel that it would have been better if I had not fished. I think that I do not mistake. It is a faint intimation, yet so are the first streaks of morning. It tempts me continually because it is a means of becoming acquainted with Nature — not only with fishes, but night and water and the scenery which I otherwise see under the same aspects; and occasionally, though not so often, because I wished to add fish to my fare for variety. There is unquestionably this instinct in me which belongs to the lower orders of creation; yet with every year I am less a fisherman, though without more humanity or even wisdom; at present I am no fisherman at all. But I see that if I were to live in a wilderness I should again be tempted to become a fisher and hunter in earnest.

Beside, there is something essentially unclean about this diet and all flesh, and I began to see where housework commences, and whence the endeavor, which costs so much, to wear a tidy and respectable appearance each day, to keep the house sweet and free from all ill odors and sights.

Having been my own butcher and scullion and cook, as well as the gentleman for whom the dishes were served up, I can speak from an unusually complete experience. The practical

objection to animal food in my case was its uncleanness; and besides, when I had caught and cleaned and cooked and eaten my fish, they seemed not to have fed me essentially. It was insignificant and unnecessary, and cost more than it came to. A little bread or a few potatoes would have done as well, with less trouble and filth. Like many of my contemporaries, I had rarely for many years used animal food, or tea, or coffee, etc.; not so much because of any ill effects which I had traced to them, as because they were not agreeable to my imagination. The repugnance to animal food is not the effect of experience, but is an instinct. It appeared more beautiful to live low and fare hard in many respects; and though I never did so, I went far enough to please my imagination.

I believe that every man since Adam, and including him, who has ever been in earnest to preserve his higher or poetic faculties in the best condition, has been particularly inclined to abstain from animal food, and from much food of any kind. It is a significant fact, stated by entomologists, — I find it in Kirby and Spence, — that "some insects in their perfect state, though furnished with the organs of feeding, make no use of them" and consume no food whatever; and they lay it down as a "general rule, that almost all insects in this state eat much less than in that of larvæ. The voracious caterpillar, when transformed into a butterfly . . . and the gluttonous maggot, when become a fly," content themselves with a drop or two of honey or some other sweet liquid. The abdomen under the wings of

the butterfly still represents the larva. This is the tidbit which tempts his insectivorous fate. The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them.

It is hard to provide and cook so simple and clean a diet as will not offend the imagination; but this, I think, is to be fed when we feed the body; they should both sit down at the same table. Yet perhaps this may be done. The fruits eaten temperately need not make us ashamed of our appetites, nor interrupt the worthiest pursuits. But put an extra condiment into your dish, and it will poison you. It is not worth the while to live by rich cookery.

Most men would feel shame if caught preparing with their own hands precisely such a dinner, whether of animal or vegetable food, as is every day prepared for them by others. Yet till this is otherwise we are not civilized, and, if gentlemen and ladies, are not true men and women. This certainly suggests what change is to be made. It may be vain to ask why the imagination will not be reconciled to flesh and fat. I am satisfied that it is not. Is it not a reproach that man is a carnivorous animal? True, he can and does live, in a great measure, by preying on other animals; but this is a miserable way — as any one who will go to snaring rabbits, or slaughtering lambs, may learn — and he will be regarded as a benefactor of his race who shall teach man to confine himself to a more innocent and wholesome diet.

Whatever my own practice may be, I have no doubt that it is a part of the destiny of the human race, in its gradual improvement, to leave off eating animals, as surely as the savage tribes have left off eating each other when they came in contact with the more civilized.

If one listens to the faintest but constant suggestions of his genius, which are certainly true, he sees not to what extremes, or even insanity, it may lead him; and yet that way, as he grows more resolute and faithful, his road lies. The faintest assured objection which one healthy man feels will at length prevail over the arguments and customs of mankind. No man ever followed his genius till it misled him.[1] Though the result were bodily weakness, yet perhaps no one can say that the consequences were to be regretted, for these were a life in conformity to higher principles.

If the day and the night are such that you greet them with joy, and life emits a fragrance like flowers and sweet-scented herbs, is more elastic, more starry, more immortal, — that is your success. All nature is your congratulation, and

[1] This was a favorite thought of Thoreau. In November, 1850, he wrote: "I find it to be the height of wisdom not to endeavor to oversee myself, and live a life of prudence and common sense; but to see over and above myself, entertain sublime conjectures, make myself the thoroughfare of thrilling thoughts, live all that can be lived." Again, at the end of 1852 he wrote: "Keep the time; observe the hours of the Universe, not of the cars. What are threescore years and ten, hurriedly and coarsely lived, to moments of divine leisure, in which your life is coincident with the life of the Universe?" — F. B. S.

you have cause momentarily to bless yourself. The greatest gains and values are farthest from being appreciated. We easily come to doubt if they exist. We soon forget them. They are the highest reality. Perhaps the facts most astounding and most real are never communicated by man to man. The true harvest of my daily life is somewhat as intangible and indescribable as the tints of morning or evening. It is a little star-dust caught, a segment of the rainbow which I have clutched.

Yet, for my part, I was never unusually squeamish; I could sometimes eat a fried rat with a good relish, if it were necessary. I am glad to have drunk water so long, for the same reason that I prefer the natural sky to an opium-eater's heaven. I would fain keep sober always; and there are infinite degrees of drunkenness. I believe that water is the only drink for a wise man; wine is not so noble a liquor; and think of dashing the hopes of a morning with a cup of warm coffee, or of an evening with a dish of tea! Ah, how low I fall when I am tempted by them! Even music may be intoxicating.

Such apparently slight causes destroyed Greece and Rome, and will destroy England and America. Of all ebriosity, who does not prefer to be intoxicated by the air he breathes? I have found it to be the most serious objection to coarse labors long continued, that they compelled me to eat and drink coarsely also. But to tell the truth, I find myself at present somewhat less particular in these respects. I carry less religion to the table, — ask no blessing; not because I am wiser

than I was, but, I am obliged to confess, because, however much it is to be regretted, with years I have grown more coarse and indifferent. Perhaps these questions are entertained only in youth, as most believe of poetry. My practice is "nowhere," my opinion is here. Nevertheless I am far from regarding myself as one of those privileged ones to whom the Ved refers when it says, that "he who has true faith in the Omnipresent Supreme Being may eat all that exists," that is, is not bound to inquire what is his food, or who prepares it; and even in their case it is to be observed, as a Hindoo commentator has remarked, that the Vedant limits this privilege to "the time of distress."

Who has not sometimes derived an inexpressible satisfaction from his food in which appetite had no share? I have been thrilled to think that I owed a mental perception to the commonly gross sense of taste, that I have been inspired through the palate, that some berries which I had eaten on a hill-side had fed my genius, my fancy and imagination.[1] "The soul not being

[1] In Ellery Channing's first MS. Life of Thoreau, from whence I transferred it to the enlarged edition of 1902 (p. 12), occurred this very descriptive passage: "He was one of those who keep so much of the boy in them that he could never pass a berry without picking it. For huckleberries, wild strawberries, chestnuts, acorns and wild apples he had a snatch of veneration almost superstitious. I, being gifted with a lesser degree of this edible religion, frequently had to leave him in the rear, picking his berry, while I sat looking at the landscape, or admiring my berry-loving lad." Channing rambled with Thoreau more than all other men put together, and

mistress of herself," says Thseng-tseu, "one looks, and one does not see; one listens, and one does not hear; one eats, and one does not know the savor of food." And his master, Confucius, says: "Of all men there is not one who does not eat and drink; but very few among them know how to distinguish savors." He who distinguishes the true savor of his food can never be a glutton; he who does not cannot be otherwise. A puritan may go to his brown-bread crust with as gross an appetite as ever an alderman to his turtle. I need not look beyond myself for my examples. Not that food which entereth into the mouth defileth a man, but the appetite with which it is eaten. It is neither the quality nor the quantity, but the devotion to sensual savors; when that which is eaten is not a viand to sustain our animal, or inspire our spiritual life, but food for the worms that possess us.

If the hunter has a taste for mud-turtles, musk-rats, and other such savage tid-bits, the fine lady indulges a taste for some form of potted cheese or jelly made of a calf's foot, or for sardines from over the sea, and they are even. He goes to the mill-pond, she to her preserve-pot. The wonder is how they, how you and I, can live this slimy beastly life, eating and drinking.

Though we are wont to attribute to woman a finer and more sibylline nature than to man, I am struck with the fact that in these respects she is rarely a reformer, and is intolerant of reform.

noted more closely what distinguished him from other men. — F. B. S.

I am not sure that he who seeks most faithfully to refine and ennoble life in these respects will after all find more sympathy in the intellect and philosophy of man than in the refinement and delicacy of woman.

Our whole life is startlingly moral. There is never an instant's truce between virtue and vice. Goodness is the only investment that never fails. In the music of the harp which trembles round the world it is the insisting on this which thrills us. The harp is the travelling patterer for the Universe's Insurance Company, recommending its laws, and our little goodness is all the assessment that we pay.

Though the youth at last grows indifferent, the laws of the universe are not indifferent, but are forever on the side of the most sensitive. Listen to every zephyr for some reproof, for it is surely there, and he is unfortunate who does not hear it.[1] We cannot touch a string or move

[1] The susceptibility of Thoreau to music cannot be overstated. It was the one subject on which, from first to last, he might be charged with exaggeration. Sitting at an east window of the Thoreau-Alcott house, on the main street of Concord, in an August noon of 1852, he hears the sound of a distant piano, and says:

"At length the melody steals into my being. I know not when it began to occupy me. By some fortunate coincidence of thought or circumstance I am attuned to the Universe; I am fitted to hear. My being moves in a sphere of melody; my fancy and imagination are excited to an inconceivable degree. This is no longer the dull earth on which I stood. It is possible to live a grander life here; already the steed is stamping, the knights are prancing; already our thoughts bid a proud farewell to the so-called actual life and its humble glories." — F. B. S.

a stop but the charming moral transfixes us. Many an irksome noise, go a long way off, is heard as music, a proud sweet satire on the meanness of our lives.

I am conscious of an animal in my nature, which awakens when my higher intellectual nature slumbers; but while this is awake is inactive. It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled; like the worms which, even in life and health, occupy our bodies. It feeds and drinks and reposes, and would fain gratify the most sensual appetite in spite of the intellect. It would seem as if I might withdraw from it, but could never change its nature. I fear that it may enjoy a certain health of its own; that we may be well, yet not pure. The other day I picked up the lower jaw of a hog,[1] with white and sound teeth and tusks, which suggested that there was an animal health and vigor distinct from the spiritual. This creature succeeded by other means than temperance and purity.

"That in which men differ from brute beasts," says Mencius, "is a thing very inconsiderable; the common herd lose it very soon; superior men preserve it carefully." I do not know how it is with other men, but I find it very difficult to be chaste. Methinks I can be chaste in my relations to persons, and yet I do not find myself clean. I have frequent cause to be ashamed of myself. I am well, but I am not pure. Who knows what sort of life would result if we had attained to

[1] This was in Plymouth, while rambling with Marston Watson. — F. B. S.

purity? If I knew so wise a man as could teach me purity I would go to seek him forthwith. "A command over our passions, and over the external senses of the body, and good acts, are declared by the Ved to be indispensable in the mind's approximation to God." Yet the spirit can for the time pervade and control every member and function of the body, and transmute what in form is the grossest sensuality into purity and devotion.

The generative energy, which, when we are loose, dissipates and makes us unclean, when we are continent invigorates and inspires us. Chastity is the flowering of man; and what are called Genius, Heroism, Holiness, and the like, are but various fruits which succeed it. Man flows at once to God when the channel of purity is open. By turns our purity inspires and our impurity casts us down. He is blessed who is assured that the animal is dying out in him day by day, and the divine being established. Perhaps there is none but has cause for shame on account of the inferior and brutish nature to which he is allied. I fear that we are such gods or demigods only as fauns and satyrs, the divine allied to beasts, the creatures of appetite, and that, to some extent, our very life is our disgrace —

"How happy 's he who hath due place assigned
To his beasts and disafforested his mind!

. . . . . .

Can use his horse, goat, wolf, and ev'ry beast,
And is not ass himself to all the rest!
Else man not only is the herd of swine,
But he 's those devils too which did incline
Them to a headlong rage, and made them worse;
For man can add weight to Heaven's heaviest curse."

All sensuality is one, though it takes many forms; all purity is one. It is the same whether a man eat, or drink, or cohabit, or sleep sensually. They are but one appetite, and we only need to see a person do any one of these things to know how great a sensualist he is. The impure can neither stand nor sit with purity. The pure cannot eat, nor drink nor cohabit with impurity. When the reptile is attacked at one mouth of his burrow, he shows himself at another. It is therefore vain to watch or to pour in water to drown him out at one alone, when he may be far out in the clover-field by another. If you would be chaste, you must be temperate.

What is chastity? How shall a man know if he is chaste? He shall not know it. We have heard of this virtue, but we know not what it is. We speak conformably to the rumor which we have heard. From exertion come wisdom and purity; from sloth, ignorance and sensuality. Go not to a warm latitude in order to live a simple and pure life. It would be harder there than it is here. If you migrate, let it be to a colder and more stubborn soil still. Be a highlander, a mountaineer in virtue. Virtue was not born under a palm tree. If you seek the warmth, even of affection, from a similar motive to that from which cats and dogs and slothful persons hug the fire, you are on the downward road. Better the cold affection of the sun reflected from fields of ice and snow. In the student sensuality is a sluggish habit of mind. An unclean person is universally a slothful one, one who sits astride of a stove; who remains in bed after the light-

bringer has awakened him; whom the sun shines on prostrate, who reposes without being fatigued. If you would avoid uncleanness, and all the sins, work earnestly, though it be at cleaning a stable. Ah! Nature is hard to be overcome, but she must be overcome. What avails it that you are Christian, if you are not purer than the heathen, if you deny yourself no more, if you are not more religious? I know of many systems of religion esteemed heathenish whose precepts fill the reader with shame, and provoke him to new endeavors, though it be to the performance of rites merely.

I hesitate to say these things, but it is not because of the subject, — I care not how obscene my *words* are, — but because I cannot speak of them without betraying my impurity.[1] We discourse freely without shame of one form of sensuality, and are silent about another. We are so degraded that we cannot speak simply of the necessary functions of human nature. In earlier ages, in some countries, every function was reverently spoken of and regulated by law. Nothing was too trivial for the Hindoo lawgiver, however offensive it may be to modern taste. He teaches how to eat, drink, cohabit, void excrement and urine, and the like, elevating what is mean, and does not falsely excuse himself by calling these things trifles.

Every man is the builder of a temple, called his body, to the god he worships after a style purely

[1] This subject much occupied his thoughts in the summer of 1852. There is a long essay on it in one of Thoreau's letters to his new friend Harrison Blake, in September of that year. — F. B. S.

his own; nor can he get off by hammering marble instead. We are all sculptors and painters, and our material is our own flesh and blood and bones. Any nobleness begins at once to refine a man's features, any meanness or sensuality to imbrute them.

John Farmer sat at his door one September evening, after a hard day's work, his mind still running on his labor more or less. Having bathed, he sat down to recreate his intellectual man. It was a rather cool evening, and some of his neighbors were apprehending a frost. He had not attended to the train of his thoughts long when he heard some one playing on a flute, and that sound harmonized with his mood. Still he thought of his work; but the burden of his thought was, that though this kept running in his head, and he found himself planning and contriving it against his will, yet it concerned him very little. It was no more than the scurf of his skin, which was constantly shuffled off. But the notes of the flute came home to his ears out of a different sphere from that he worked in, or his neighbors lived in; and suggested work for certain faculties which slumbered in him. They gently did away with the street, and the village, and the state in which he lived. A voice seemed to say to him: Why do you stay here and live this mean moiling life, when a glorious existence is possible for you? Those same stars twinkle over other fields than these. But how to come out of this condition and actually migrate thither? All that he could think of was to practise some new austerity, to let his mind descend into his

body and redeem it, and treat himself with ever-increasing respect.[1]

[1] Although this chapter opens with a continuation of the experience of 1845, after fishing at Baker Farm, much of its contents comes from the Journals of 1851 and later, long after Thoreau left Walden as a hermit. But he kept a boat there, as well as on the river, for years, and mentions in December (the 28th), 1852, that he brought his boat that day from Walden in the rain. The chase of the loon described at length in Chapter XII was made in this boat, October 8, 1852. — F. B. S.

CHAPTER XII — BRUTE NEIGHBORS

SOMETIMES I had a companion in my fishing, who came through the village to my house from the other side of the town,[1] and the catching of the dinner was as much a social exercise as the eating of it.

Hermit. I wonder what the world is doing now. I have not heard so much as a locust over the sweet-fern these three hours. The pigeons are all asleep upon their roosts, — no flutter from them. Was that a farmer's noon horn which sounded from beyond the woods just now? The hands are coming in to boiled salt beef and cider and Indian bread. Why will men worry themselves so?

He that does not eat need not work. I wonder how much they have reaped. Who would live there where a body can never think for the bark-

[1] This companion, also called "The Poet," was Ellery Channing, who then lived on Ponkatassett Hill, three miles at least from the Walden hut, in the North Quarter of Concord township, in a house now gone, in front of the estate of Mr. Robb, and nearly opposite St. Andrew's School. In his poem "New England," Channing spoke of it as —

> My small cottage on the lonely hill,
> Where like a hermit I must bide my time.

But the Hermit in this colloquy was Thoreau, of course. — F. B. S.

ing of Bose? And O, the housekeeping! to keep bright the devil's door-knobs, and scour his tubs this bright day! Better not keep a house. Say, some hollow tree; and then for morning-calls and dinner-parties! Only a woodpecker tapping. O, they swarm; the sun is too warm there; they are born too far into life for me. I have water from the spring, and a loaf of brown bread on the shelf. Hark! I hear a rustling of the leaves. Is it some ill-fed village hound yielding to the instinct of the chase? or the lost pig which is said to be in these woods, whose tracks I saw after the rain? It comes on apace; my sumachs and sweet-briers tremble. Eh, Mr. Poet, is it you? How do you like the world today?[1]

Poet. See those clouds; how they hang! That 's the greatest thing I have seen today. There 's nothing like it in old paintings, nothing like it in foreign lands — unless when we were off the coast of Spain. That 's a true Mediterranean sky. I thought, as I have my living to get, and have not eaten today, that I might go a-fishing. That 's the true industry for poets. It is the only trade I have learned. Come, let 's along.

Hermit. I cannot resist. My brown bread will soon be gone. I will go with you gladly soon, but I am just concluding a serious meditation. Methinks I am near unto the end of it. Leave me alone, then, for a while. But that we may

[1] In Channing's reply he had in mind his voyage in a sailing vessel through the Straits of Gibraltar and along the coast of Spain, on his way to Italy, in 1846, — scenery to which he often alludes in his poems. — F. B. S.

not be delayed, you shall be digging the bait meanwhile. Angle-worms are rarely to be met with in these parts, where the soil was never fattened with manure; the race is nearly extinct. The sport of digging the bait is nearly equal to that of catching the fish, when one's appetite is not too keen; and this thou may'st have all to thyself today. I would advise you to set in the spade down yonder among the ground-nuts, where you see the johnswort waving. I think that I may warrant you one worm to every three sods you turn up, if you look well in among the roots of the grass, as if you were weeding. Or, if you choose to go farther, it may not be unwise, for I have found the increase of fair bait to be very nearly as the squares of the distances.

Hermit alone. Let me see; where was I? Methinks I was nearly in this frame of mind; the world lay about at this angle. Shall I go to heaven or a-fishing? If I should bring this meditation to an end, would another so sweet occasion be likely to offer? I was as near being resolved into the essence of things as ever I was in my life. I fear my thoughts will not come back to me. If it would do any good, I would whistle for them. When they make us an offer, is it wise to say, We will think of it? My thoughts have left no track, and I cannot find the path again. What was it that I was thinking of? It was a very hazy day. I will just try these three sentences of Con-fut-see; they may fetch that state about again. I know not whether it was the dumps or a budding ecstasy. *Mem.* They were given but one chance, though we may think

there will be another. There never is but one opportunity of a kind.

Poet. How now, Hermit, is it too soon? I have got just thirteen whole ones, beside several which are imperfect or undersized; but they will do for the smaller fry; they do not cover up the hook so much. Those village worms are quite too large; a shiner may make a meal off one without finding the skewer.

Hermit. Well, then, let 's be off. Shall we to the Concord? There 's good sport there if the water be not too high.[1]

Why do precisely these objects which we behold make a world? Why has man just these species of animals for his neighbors; as if nothing but a mouse could have filled this crevice? I suspect that Pilpay & Co.[2] have put animals to their best use, for they are all beasts of burden, in a sense, made to carry some portion of our thoughts.

The mice which haunted my house were not the common ones, which are said to have been introduced into the country, but a peculiar wild native kind not found in the village. I sent one to a distinguished naturalist, and it interested him much. When I was building my house, a long-

[1] The Concord River was but a half-mile or so west from Walden, — perhaps a mile from the hut to a good fishing-place, between Baker Farm and the foot of Fair Haven hill. — F. B. S.

[2] "Pilpay & Co." is an expression for the whole race of fabulists, from Bidpai, as Pilpay is now called, through Æsop, Babrius, Phædrus and La Fontaine, who used animals for the instruction or reproof of mankind. — F. B. S.

bird was, but is coeval with the sky it reflects. The woods do not yield another such a gem. The traveller does not often look into such a limpid well. The ignorant or reckless sportsman often shoots the parent at such a time, and leaves these innocents to fall a prey to some prowling beast or bird, or gradually mingle with the decaying leaves which they so much resemble. It is said that when hatched by a hen[1] they will directly disperse on some alarm, and so are lost, for they never hear the mother's call which gathers them again. These were my hens and chickens.[2]

It is remarkable how many creatures live wild and free though secret in the woods, and still sustain themselves in the neighborhood of towns, suspected by hunters only. How retired the otter manages to live here! He grows to be four feet long, as big as a small boy, perhaps without any human being getting a glimpse of him. I formerly saw the raccoon in the woods behind where my house is built, and probably still heard their whinnering at night.

Commonly I rested an hour or two in the shade at noon, after planting, and ate my lunch, and

[1] I tried this experiment when a boy, and upon visiting the old hen one day, found her in a state of discomfiture, for her entire brood had hatched and disappeared. I tried it again, and by watching more closely about hatching time, I observed that as soon as the birds were free from the egg shells they crawled out of the hen's nest and ran off, even before they were thoroughly dry. — H. H. H.

[2] Thoreau's experience with poultry breeding has been given in the Village chapter. He says in an omitted passage: "I was perhaps the only inhabitant of Concord or of the State who did not hear the cock crow." — F. B. S.

read a little by a spring,[1] which was the source of a swamp and of a brook, oozing from under Brister's Hill, half a mile from my field. The approach to this was through a succession of descending grassy hollows, full of young pitch-pines, into a larger wood about the swamp. There, in a very secluded and shaded spot, under a spreading white-pine, there was yet a clean firm sward to sit on. I had dug out the spring and made a well of clear gray water, where I could dip up a pailful without roiling it; and thither I went for this purpose almost every day in midsummer, when the pond was warmest. Thither, too, the woodcock led her brood, to probe the mud for worms, — flying but a foot above them down the bank, while they ran in a troop beneath; but at last, spying me, she would leave her young and circle round and round me, nearer and nearer till within four or five feet, pretending broken wings or legs to attract my attention, and get off her young, who would already have taken up their march, with faint, wiry peep, single file through the swamp, as she directed. Or I heard the peep of the young when I could not see the parent bird.

There, too, the turtledoves sat over the spring, or fluttered from bough to bough of the soft

[1] This spring, under Brister's Hill, and near the wooded and watered tract now called "The Park" and "Fairyland," still flows and furnishes its cold draught to ramblers in the Walden woods; but no one now cares for it so faithfully as Thoreau did; nor is it so much frequented by the birds. It is known as "Brister's Spring" from the freedman who also gave his name to the hill.—F. B. S.

white-pines over my head in the heat of the day; or the red squirrel, coursing down the nearest bough, was particularly familiar and inquisitive. You only need sit still long enough in some attractive spot in the woods that all its inhabitants may exhibit themselves to you by turns.

I was witness to events of a less peaceful character. One day when I went out to my wood-pile, or rather my pile of stumps, I observed two large ants, the one red, the other much larger, nearly half an inch long, and black, fiercely contending with one another. Having once got hold they never let go, but struggled and wrestled and rolled on the chips incessantly. It was evidently a struggle for life and death which had grown out of some serious feud. Looking farther, I was surprised to find that the chips were covered with such combatants, that it was not a *duellum*, but a *bellum*, a war between two races of ants, the red always pitted against the black, and frequently two red ones to one black. The legions of these Myrmidons covered all the hills and vales in my wood-yard, and the ground was already strewn with the dead and dying, both red and black. It was the only battle which I have ever witnessed, the only battle-field I ever trod while the battle was raging; internecine war; the red republicans on the one hand, and the black imperialists on the other.

On every side they were engaged in deadly combat, yet without any noise that I could hear, and human soldiers never fought so resolutely. I watched a couple that were fast locked in each other's embraces, in a little sunny valley amid the

chips, now at noon-day prepared to fight till the sun went down, or life went out. The smaller red champion had fastened himself like a vice to his adversary's front, and through all the tumblings on that field never for an instant ceased to gnaw at one of his feelers near the root, having already caused the other to go by the board; while the stronger black one dashed him from side to side, and as I saw on looking nearer, had already divested him of several of his members. They fought with more pertinacity than bull-dogs, that will not let go, though all their legs are cut off. Neither manifested the least disposition to retreat. It was evident that their battle-cry was Conquer or die.

In the mean while there came along a single red ant on the hillside of this valley, evidently full of excitement, who either had despatched his foe, or had not yet taken part in the battle — probably the latter, for he had lost none of his limbs — whose mother had charged him to return with his shield or upon it. Or perchance he was some Achilles, who had nourished his wrath apart, and had now come to avenge or rescue his Patroclus. He saw this unequal combat from afar, — for the blacks were nearly twice the size of the red, — he drew near with rapid pace till he stood on his guard within half an inch of the combatants, then, watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the black warrior, and commenced his operations near the root of his right fore-leg, leaving the foe to select among his own members; and so there were three united for life, as if a new kind of attraction had been invented which put all other locks and

though they say that Huber is the only modern author who appears to have been witness to these combats. "Æneas Sylvius," say they, "after giving a very circumstantial account of one contested with great obstinacy by a great and small species on the trunk of a pear tree," adds that, "'This action was fought in the pontificate of Eugenius the Fourth, in the presence of Nicholas Pistoriensis, an eminent lawyer, who related the whole history of the battle with the greatest fidelity.' A similar engagement between great and small ants is recorded by Olaus Magnus, in which the small ones, being victorious, are said to have buried the bodies of their own soldiers, but left those of their giant enemies a prey to the birds. This event happened previous to the expulsion of the tyrant Christiern the Second from Sweden." The battle which I witnessed took place in the Presidency of Polk, five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill.

In summer days, indeed, many a village Bose, whose master did not know that he was out, — fit only to course a mud-turtle in a victualling cellar, sported his heavy quarters in the woods, without the knowledge of his master, and ineffectually smelled at old fox burrows and woodchucks' holes; led perchance by some slight cur which nimbly threaded the wood, and might still inspire a natural terror in its denizens; — now far behind his guide, barking like a canine bull of Bashan toward some small squirrel which had treed itself for scrutiny, then, cantering off, bending the bushes with his weight, imagining that

he is on the track of some stray member of the jerbilla family.

Once also in the summer I was surprised to see a cat walking along the stony shore of the pond, for they rarely wander so far from home. The surprise was mutual. Nevertheless the most domestic cat, which has lain on a rug all her days, appears quite at home in the woods, and, by her sly and stealthy behavior, proves herself more native there than the regular inhabitants.

Once, when berrying, I met with a cat with young kittens in the woods, quite wild, and they all, like their mother, had their backs up and were fiercely spitting at me. A few years before I lived in the woods there was what was called a "winged cat" in one of the farm-houses in Lincoln nearest the pond, Mr. Gilian Baker's. When I called to see her in June, 1842, she was gone a-hunting in the woods, as was her wont (I am not sure whether it was a male or female, and so use the more common pronoun), but her mistress told me that she came into the neighborhood a little more than a year before, in April, and was finally taken into their house; that she was of a dark brownish-gray color, with a white spot on her throat, and white feet, and had a large bushy tail like a fox; that in the winter the fur grew thick and flatted out along her sides, forming stripes ten or twelve inches long by two and a half wide, and under her chin like a muff, the upper side loose, the under matted like felt, and in the spring these appendages dropped off. They gave me a pair of her "wings," which I keep still. There is no appearance of a membrane

about them. Some thought it was part flying-squirrel or some other wild animal, which is not impossible, for, according to naturalists, prolific hybrids have been produced by the union of the marten and domestic cat. This would have been the right kind of cat for me to keep, if I had kept any; for why should not a poet's cat be winged as well as his horse?

In the fall the loon (*Colymbus glacialis*) came, as usual, to moult and bathe in the pond, making the woods ring with his wild laughter before I had risen. At rumor of his arrival all the Milldam sportsmen are on the alert, in gigs and on foot, two by two and three by three, with patent rifles and conical balls and spy-glasses. They come rustling through the woods like autumn leaves, at least ten men to one loon. Some station themselves on this side of the pond, some on that, for the poor bird cannot be omnipresent; if he dive here he must come up there.

But now the kind October wind rises, rustling the leaves and rippling the surface of the water, so that no loon can be heard or seen, though his foes sweep the pond with spy-glasses, and make the woods resound with their discharges. The waves generously rise and dash angrily, taking sides with all water-fowl; but no thanks to the rising this time; for the dweller by the pond heard when the loon went off in the morning rain with one loud, long, hearty laugh; and our sportsmen must beat a retreat to town and shop and unfinished jobs. But they were too often successful. When I went to get a pail of water early in the morning I frequently saw this stately bird

sailing out of my cove within a few rods. If I endeavored to overtake him in a boat, in order to see how he would manœuvre, he would dive and be completely lost, so that I did not discover him again, sometimes, till the latter part of the day. He could avoid me not only as a bird by flying, if that were necessary, but as a fish by swimming under water. But I was more than a match for him on the surface. He commonly went off in a rain.

As I was paddling along the north shore one very calm October afternoon, — for such days especially they settle onto the lakes, like the milkweed down,—having looked in vain over the pond for a loon, suddenly one, sailing out from the shore toward the middle a few rods in front of me, set up his wild laugh and betrayed himself. I pursued with a paddle and he dived, but when he came up I was nearer than before. He dived again, but I miscalculated the direction he would take, and we were fifty rods apart when he came to the surface this time, for I had helped to widen the interval; and again he laughed long and loud, and with more reason than before. He manœuvred so cunningly that I could not get within half a dozen rods of him. Each time, when he came to the surface, turning his head this way and that, he coolly surveyed the water and the land, and apparently chose his course so that he might come up where there was the widest expanse of water and at the greatest distance from the boat. It was surprising how quickly he made up his mind and put his resolve into execution. He led me at once to the widest part of the pond, and could

not be driven from it. While he was thinking one thing in his brain, I was endeavoring to divine his thought in mine. It was a pretty game, played on the smooth surface of the pond, a man against a loon. Suddenly your adversary's checker disappears beneath the board, and the problem is to divine his thoughts or to place yours nearest to where his will appear again. Sometimes he would come up unexpectedly, on the opposite side of me, having apparently passed directly under the boat. So long-winded was he and so unweariable, that when he had swum farthest he would immediately plunge again, nevertheless; and then no wit could divine where in the deep pond, beneath the smooth surface, he might be speeding his way like a fish, for he had time and ability to visit the bottom of the pond in its deepest part. I read that a fisherman caught a loon in Seneca Lake, New York, eighty feet beneath the surface, with a hook set for trout — though Walden is deeper than that.

How surprised must the fishes be to see this ungainly visitor from another sphere speeding his way amid their schools! Yet he appeared to know his course as surely under water as on the surface, and swam much faster there. Once or twice I saw a ripple where he approached the surface, just put his head out to reconnoitre, and instantly dived again. I found that it was as well for me to rest on my oars and wait his reappearing as to endeavor to calculate where he would rise; for again and again, when I was straining my eyes over the surface one way, I would suddenly be startled by his unearthly laugh behind me.

But why, after displaying so much cunning, did he invariably betray himself the moment he came up by that loud laugh? Did not his white breast enough betray him? He was indeed a silly loon, I thought. I could commonly hear the plash of the water when he came up, and so also detected him.

But after an hour he seemed as fresh as ever, dived as willingly, and swam yet farther than at first. It was surprising to see how serenely he sailed off with unruffled breast when he came to the surface, doing all the work with his webbed feet beneath. His usual note was this demoniac laughter, yet somewhat like that of a water-fowl; but occasionally, when he had balked me most successfully and come up a long way off, he uttered a long-drawn unearthly howl, probably more like that of a wolf than any bird; as when a beast puts his muzzle to the ground and deliberately howls. This was his looning — perhaps the wildest sound that is ever heard here, making the woods ring far and wide. I concluded that he laughed in derision of my efforts, confident of his own resources. Though the sky was by this time overcast, the pond was so smooth that I could see where he broke the surface, when I did not hear him. His white breast, the stillness of the air, and the smoothness of the water were all against him. At length, having come up fifty rods off, he uttered one of those prolonged howls, as if calling on the god of loons to aid him, and immediately there came a wind from the east and rippled the surface, and filled the whole air with misty rain, and I was impressed as if it were the

prayer of the loon answered, and his god was angry with me; and so I left him disappearing far away on the tumultuous surface.

For hours, in fall days, I watched the ducks cunningly tack and veer and hold the middle of the pond, far from the sportsman; tricks which they will have less need to practise in Louisiana bayous. When compelled to rise they would sometimes circle round and round and over the pond at a considerable height, from which they could easily see to other ponds and the river, like black motes in the sky; and, when I thought they had gone off thither long since, they would settle down by a slanting flight of a quarter of a mile on to a distant part of the pond which was left free; but what beside safety they got by sailing in the middle of Walden I do not know, unless they love its water for the same reason that I do.

(*a*) This famous battle of the ants was recorded by Thoreau nearly five years afterwards, when he had left his hut, and when it had been removed even beyond Ponkatassett, to the edge of the Estabrook woods, near Carlisle. The date in the Journal is January 21, 1852; but the engagement was perhaps witnessed by Thoreau in 1845, while he was living in his hut. He continued to frequent that region up to the year of his death, 1862.

The allusions in the subsequent account are to the heroes of Concord Fight, April 19, 1775. At the dedication of the battle-monument, July 4, 1837, Thoreau, then in college, was one of the singers of Emerson's well-known hymn, to the tune of Old Hundred.

This record in the Journal for 1852, entered so long after the event, differs slightly from the pages printed by Thoreau in *Walden*. A few particulars are added, a few omitted, and the changes of tense are made to fit it to the chapter. In editing the Journal passage, a sen-

tence has got misplaced and stands in parenthesis on page 211 of the edition of 1906, instead of on page 210, where it belongs. To prevent the date in the Journal from being mistaken for the actual encounter, in printing his account in 1854, Thoreau fixes the date as in "the Presidency of Polk" (1845–49), and "five years before the passage of Webster's Fugitive-Slave Bill." The exact date of that legislation was September 19, 1850, and therefore we may assume that the ants fought in September, 1845, before the Mexican War began. The odious law was presented in the Senate by Mason, of Virginia, but as Webster voted for it, Thoreau bestowed his name on it.

The next winter Shadrach, a fugitive before the court in Boston, was rescued by a mob, taken by night to Concord, from there to Sudbury, thence to Leominster, and finally sent into Canada for safety. Thoreau's neighbor, Edwin Bigelow, a blacksmith, drove the wagon that carried Shadrach to Sudbury, and afterward sat as juryman in the trial of the rescuers.

In October, 1851, Thoreau records in his Journal (Oct. 1, 5 P. M.) that he had just put a fugitive named Williams into the train at Concord for Canada. This was a Virginia mulatto who had taken Shadrach's place as waiter at the Cornhill Coffee-house in Boston, — but had become alarmed by the arrest of fugitives, and fled on foot to Concord, with a letter to the Thoreaus from Mr. Garrison, and was lodged at their "Texas" home. Money was raised to pay his fare, and Thoreau says he "intended to despatch him at noon through to Burlington, but saw one at the depot who looked and behaved so much like a Boston policeman that I did not venture that time."

In December, 1859, Thoreau did the same friendly service for one of John Brown's escaped men, Merriam, — taking him to Acton in Emerson's carriage, and putting him on board for Canada there, to escape observation in Concord. — F. B. S.

CHAPTER XIII — HOUSE-WARMING

In October I went a-graping to the river meadows, and loaded myself with clusters more precious for their beauty and fragrance than for food. There too I admired, though I did not gather, the cranberries, small waxen gems, pendants of the meadow grass, pearly and red, which the farmer plucks with an ugly rake, leaving the smooth meadow in a snarl, heedlessly measuring them by the bushel and the dollar only, and sells the spoils of the meads to Boston and New York; destined to be *jammed*, to satisfy the tastes of lovers of Nature there.

So butchers rake the tongues of bison out of the prairie grass, regardless of the torn and drooping plant. The barberry's brilliant fruit was likewise food for my eyes merely; but I collected a small store of wild apples for coddling, which the proprietor and travellers had overlooked.

When chestnuts were ripe I laid up half a bushel for winter. It was very exciting at that season to roam the then boundless chestnut woods of Lincoln — they now sleep their long sleep under the railroad — with a bag on my shoulder, and a stick to open burrs with in my hand — for I did not always wait for the frost — amid the rustling of leaves and the loud reproofs of the

red squirrels and the jays, whose half-consumed nuts I sometimes stole, — for the burrs which they had selected were sure to contain sound ones. Sometimes in unexplored and pathless depths meeting some adventurous boy, even from other towns — from Lincoln, Weston or Wayland, as wild as myself, with his bag on his shoulder and his stick to open burrs with. Perhaps two or three had clubbed together and shaken a large tree and shared the spoil. Occasionally I climbed and shook the trees. They grew also behind my house, and one large tree which almost overshadowed it, was, when in flower, a bouquet which scented the whole neighborhood; but the squirrels and the jays got most of its fruit; the last coming in flocks early in the morning and picking the nuts out of the burrs before they fell. I relinquished these trees to them and visited the more distant woods composed wholly of chestnut. With a little more industry I might have collected a large quantity for winter use, and they would have been a good substitute for bread. Many other substitutes might, perhaps, be found.

Digging one day for fish worms I discovered the ground-nut (*Apios tuberosa*) on its string, the potato of the aborigines, — a sort of fabulous fruit, which I had begun to doubt if I had ever dug and eaten in childhood, as I had told, and had not dreamed it. I had often since seen its crimpled red velvety blossom supported by the stems of other plants without knowing it to be the same. The white man's swine and cultivation has well-nigh exterminated it. It has a sweetish

taste, much like that of a frost-bitten potato, and I found it better boiled than roasted. This tuber seemed like a faint promise of Nature to rear her own children and feed them simply here at some future period. In these days of fatted cattle and waving grain-fields this humble root, which was once the *totem* or armorial bearings of an Indian tribe, is quite forgotten, or known only by its flowering vine.

But let wild Nature reign here once more, and the tender and luxurious English grains will probably disappear before a myriad of foes, and without the care of man the crow may carry back even the last seed of corn to the great corn-field of the Indian's God in the south-west, whence he is said to have brought it; but the now almost exterminated ground-nut will perhaps revive and flourish in spite of frosts and wildness, prove itself indigenous, and resume its ancient importance and dignity as the diet of the hunter tribe. Some Indian Ceres or Minerva must have been the inventor and bestower of it; and when the reign of poetry commences here, its leaves and string of nuts may be represented on our works of art.

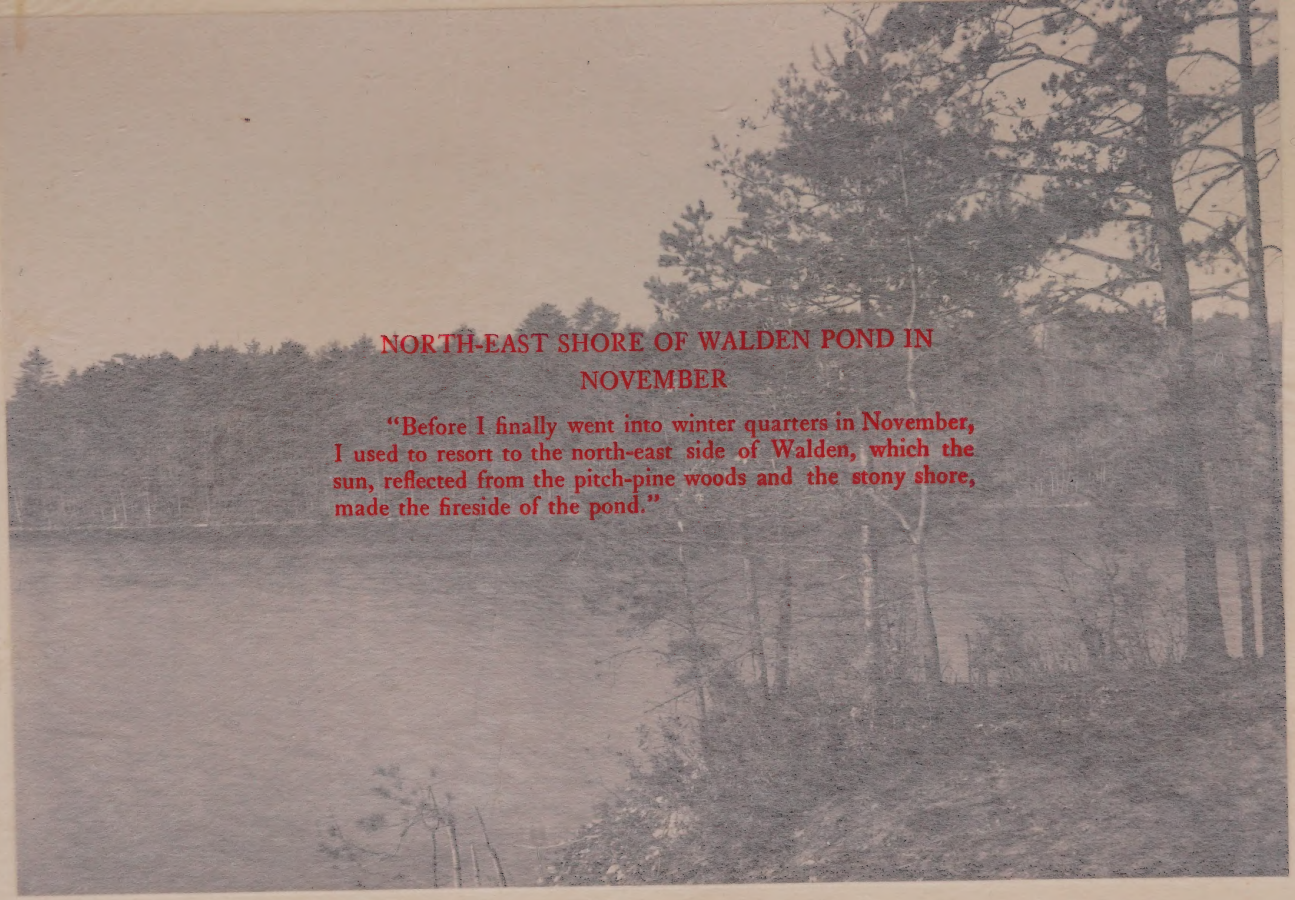
This is also the best place to observe the changing tints of autumn, and such trees as stand in or near the water change earlier than elsewhere — many before the frosts. Already, by the first of September, I had seen two or three small maples turned scarlet across the pond, beneath where the white stems of three aspens diverged, at the point of a promontory, next the water. Ah, many a tale their color told! And gradually from week

to week the character of each tree came out, and it admired itself reflected in the smooth mirror of the lake. Each morning the manager of this gallery substituted some new picture, distinguished by more brilliant or harmonious coloring, for the old upon the walls.

The wasps came by thousands to my lodge in October, as to winter-quarters, and settled on my windows within and on the walls overhead, sometimes deterring visitors from entering. Each morning, when they were numbed with cold, I swept some of them out, but I did not trouble myself much to get rid of them; I even felt complimented by their regarding my house as a desirable shelter. They never molested me seriously, though they bedded with me; and they gradually disappeared, into what crevices I do not know, avoiding winter and unspeakable cold.

Like the wasps, before I finally went into winter quarters in November, I used to resort to the north-east side of Walden, which the sun, reflected from the pitch-pine woods and the stony shore, made the fireside of the pond; it is so much pleasanter and wholesomer to be warmed by the sun while you can be, than by an artificial fire. I thus warmed myself by the still glowing embers which the summer, like a departed hunter, had left.

When I came to build my chimney I studied masonry. My bricks being second-hand ones required to be cleaned with a trowel, so that I learned more than usual of the qualities of bricks and trowels. The mortar on them was fifty years old, and was said to be still growing harder; but



NORTH-EAST SHORE OF WALDEN POND IN NOVEMBER

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this is one of those sayings which men love to repeat whether they are true or not. Such sayings themselves grow harder and adhere more firmly with age, and it would take many blows with a trowel to clean an old wiseacre of them. Many of the villages of Mesopotamia are built of second-hand bricks of a very good quality, obtained from the ruins of Babylon, and the cement on them is older and probably harder still. However that may be, I was struck by the peculiar toughness of the steel which bore so many violent blows without being worn out. As my bricks had been in a chimney before, though I did not read the name of Nebuchadnezzar on them, I picked out as many fireplace bricks as I could find, to save work and waste, and I filled the spaces between the bricks about the fireplace with stones from the pond shore, and also made my mortar with the white sand from the same place.

I lingered most about the fireplace, as the most vital part of the house. Indeed, I worked so deliberately, that though I commenced at the ground in the morning, a course of bricks raised a few inches above the floor served for my pillow at night; yet I did not get a stiff neck for it that I remember; my stiff neck is of older date.

I took a poet [1] to board for a fortnight about those times, which caused me to be put to it for room. He brought his own knife, though I had two, and we used to scour them by thrusting them into the earth. He shared with me the labors of

[1] Ellery Channing.

cooking. I was pleased to see my work rising so square and solid by degrees, and reflected, that, if it proceeded slowly, it was calculated to endure a long time. The chimney is to some extent an independent structure, standing on the ground, and rising through the house to the heavens; even after the house is burned it still stands sometimes, and its importance and independence are apparent. This was toward the end of summer. It was now November.

The north wind had now begun to cool the pond, though it took many weeks of steady blowing to accomplish it, it is so deep. When I began to have a fire at evening, before I plastered my house, the chimney carried smoke particularly well, because of the numerous chinks between the boards. Yet I passed some cheerful evenings in that cool and airy apartment, surrounded by the rough brown boards full of knots, and rafters with the bark on high overhead. My house never pleased my eye so much after it was plastered, though I was obliged to confess that it was more comfortable. Should not every apartment in which man dwells be lofty enough to create some obscurity overhead, where flickering shadows may play at evening about the rafters? These forms are more agreeable to the fancy and imagination than fresco paintings or other the most expensive furniture.

I now first began to inhabit my house, I may say, when I began to use it for warmth as well as shelter. I had got a couple of old fire-dogs to keep the wood from the hearth, and it did me good to see the soot form on the back of the

chimney which I had built, and I poked the fire with more right and more satisfaction than usual.

My dwelling was small, and I could hardly entertain an echo in it; but it seemed larger for being a single apartment and remote from neighbors. All the attractions of a house were concentrated in one room; it was kitchen, chamber, parlor, and keeping-room; and whatever satisfaction parent or child, master or servant, derive from living in a house, I enjoyed it all.

Cato says, the master of a family (*patremfamilias*) must have in his rustic villa "cellam oleariam, vinariam, dolia multa, uti lubeat caritatem expectare, et rei, et virtuti, et gloriæ erit," — that is, "an oil and wine cellar, many casks, so that it may be pleasant to expect hard times; it will be for his advantage, and virtue, and glory." I had in my cellar a firkin of potatoes, about two quarts of peas with the weevil in them, and on my shelf a little rice, a jug of molasses, and of rye and Indian meal a peck each.

I sometimes dream of a larger and more populous house, standing in a golden age, of enduring materials, and without ginger-bread work, which shall still consist of only one room, a vast, rude, substantial primitive hall, without ceiling or plastering, with bare rafters and purlins supporting a sort of lower heaven over one's head — useful to keep off rain and snow; where the king and queen posts stand out to receive your homage, when you have done reverence to the prostrate Saturn of an older dynasty on stepping over the sill; a cavernous house, wherein you must reach up a torch upon a pole to see the

roof; where some may live in the fireplace, some in the recess of a window, and some on settles, some at one end of the hall, some at another, and some aloft on rafters with the spiders, if they choose; a house which you have got into when you have opened the outside door, and the ceremony is over; where the weary traveller may wash, and eat, and converse, and sleep, without further journey; such a shelter as you would be glad to reach in a tempestuous night, containing all the essentials of a house, and nothing for house-keeping; where you can see all the treasures of the house at one view, and everything hangs upon its peg that a man should use; at once kitchen, pantry, parlor, chamber, store-house, and garret; where you can see such a necessary thing as a barrel or a ladder, so convenient a thing as a cupboard, and hear the pot boil, instead of a Chickering piano, and pay your respects to the very fire that cooks your dinner, and the oven that bakes your bread, — *bread*, I say — not biscuit, — and the necessary furniture and utensils are the chief ornaments; where the washing is not put out, nor the fire, nor the mistress, and where perhaps you are sometimes requested to move from off the trap-door, when the cook would descend into the cellar, and so learn whether the ground is solid or hollow beneath you without stamping.

A house whose inside is as open and manifest as a bird's nest, and you cannot go in at the front door and out at the back without seeing some of its inhabitants; where to be a guest is to be presented with the freedom of the house, and not

to be carefully excluded from seven eighths of it, shut up in a particular cell, and told to make yourself at home there, — in solitary confinement.

Nowadays the host does not admit you to *his* hearth, but has got the mason to build one for yourself somewhere in his alley, and hospitality is the art of *keeping* you at the greatest distance. There is as much secrecy about the cooking as if he had a design to poison you. I am aware that I have been on many a man's premises, and might have been legally ordered off, but I am not aware that I have been in many men's houses. I might visit in my old clothes a king and queen who lived simply in such a house as I have described, if I were going their way; but backing out of a modern palace will be all that I shall desire to learn, if ever I am caught in one.

It would seem as if the very language of our parlors would lose all its nerve and degenerate into *palaver* wholly, our lives pass at such remoteness from its symbols, and its metaphors and tropes are necessarily so far fetched, through slides and dumb-waiters, as it were; in other words, the parlor is so far from the kitchen and workshop. The dinner even is only the parable of a dinner, commonly. As if only the savage dwelt near enough to Nature and Truth to borrow a trope from them. How can the scholar, who dwells away in the North-west Territory or the Isle of Man, tell what is parliamentary in the kitchen?

However, only one or two of my guests were ever bold enough to stay and eat a hasty-pudding with me; but when they saw that crisis approach-

ing they beat a hasty retreat rather, as if it would shake the house to its foundations. Nevertheless, it stood through a great many hasty-puddings.

I did not plaster till it was freezing weather. I brought over some whiter and cleaner sand for this purpose from the opposite shore of the pond in a boat, a sort of conveyance which would have tempted me to go much further if necessary. My house had in the meanwhile been shingled down to the ground on every side. In lathing I was pleased to be able to send home each nail with a single blow of the hammer, and it was my ambition to transfer the plaster from the board to the wall neatly and rapidly. I remembered the story of a conceited fellow, who, in fine clothes, was wont to lounge about the village once, giving advice to workmen. Venturing one day to substitute deeds for words, he turned up his cuffs, seized a plasterer's board, and having loaded his trowel without mishap, with a complacent look toward the lathing overhead, made a bold gesture thitherward; and straightway, to his complete discomfiture, received the whole contents in his ruffled bosom.

I admired anew the economy and convenience of plastering, which so effectually shuts out the cold and takes a handsome finish, and I learned the various casualties to which the plasterer is liable. I was surprised to see how thirsty the bricks were which drank up all the moisture in my plaster before I had smoothed it, and how many pailfuls of water it takes to christen a new hearth. I had the previous winter made a small quantity of lime by burning the shells of the *Unio*

fluviatilis, which our river affords, for the sake of the experiment; so that I knew where my materials came from. I might have got good limestone within a mile or two and burned it myself, if I had cared to do so.

But to return to the pond; it had in the mean while begun to freeze over, in the shadiest and shallowest coves, some days or even weeks before the general freezing. The first ice is especially interesting and perfect, being hard, dark, and transparent, and affords the best opportunity that ever offers for examining the bottom where it is shallow; for you can lie at your length on ice only an inch thick, like a skater insect on the surface of the water, and study the bottom at your leisure, only two or three inches distant, like a picture behind a glass, and the water is necessarily always smooth then. There are many furrows in the sand where some creature has travelled about and doubled on its tracks; and, for wrecks, it is strewn with the cases of caddis worms made of minute grains of white quartz. Perhaps these have creased it, for you find some of their cases in the furrows, though they are deep and broad for them to make. But the ice itself is the object of most interest, though you must improve the earliest opportunity to study it. If you examine it closely the morning after it freezes, you find that the greater part of the bubbles, which at first appeared to be within it, are against its under surface, and that more are continually rising from the bottom; while the ice is as yet comparatively solid and dark; that is, you see the

water through it. These bubbles are from an eightieth to an eighth of an inch in diameter, very clear and beautiful, and you see your face reflected in them through the ice. There may be thirty or forty of them to a square inch. There are also already within the ice narrow oblong perpendicular bubbles about half an inch long, sharp cones with the apex upward; or oftener, if the ice is quite fresh, minute spherical bubbles one directly above another, like a string of beads. But these within the ice are not so numerous nor obvious as those beneath.

I sometimes used to cast on stones to try the strength of the ice, and those which broke through carried in air with them, which formed very large and conspicuous white bubbles beneath. One day when I came to the same place forty-eight hours afterward, I found that those large bubbles were still perfect, though an inch more of ice had formed, as I could see distinctly by the seam in the edge of a cake. But as the last two days had been very warm, like an Indian summer, the ice was not now transparent, showing the dark green color of the water, and the bottom, but opaque and whitish or gray, and though twice as thick, was hardly stronger than before, for the air bubbles had greatly expanded under this heat and run together, and lost their regularity; they were no longer one directly over another, but often like silvery coins poured from a bag, one overlapping another, or in thin flakes, as if occupying slight cleavages. The beauty of the ice was gone, and it was too late to study the bottom. Being curious to know what position my great bubbles oc-

cupied with regard to the new ice, I broke out a cake containing a middling-sized one, and turned it bottom upward. The new ice had formed around and under the bubble, so that it was included between the two ices. It was wholly in the lower ice, but close against the upper, and was flattish, or perhaps slightly lenticular, with a rounded edge, a quarter of an inch deep by four inches in diameter; and I was surprised to find that directly under the bubble the ice was melted with great regularity in the form of a saucer reversed, to the height of five eighths of an inch in the middle, leaving a thin partition there between the water and the bubble, hardly an eighth of an inch thick; and in many places the small bubbles in this partition had burst out downward, and probably there was no ice at all under the largest bubbles, which were a foot in diameter. I inferred therefore that the infinite number of minute bubbles which I had first seen against the under surface of the ice were now frozen in likewise, and that each, in its degree, had operated like a burning-glass on the ice beneath to melt and rot it. These are the little air-guns which contribute to make the ice crack and whoop.

At length the winter set in in good earnest, just as I had finished plastering, and the wind began to howl around the house as if it had not had permission to do so till then. Night after night the geese came lumbering in in the dark with a clangor and a whistling of wings, even after the ground was covered with snow; some to alight in Walden, and some flying low over the woods toward Fair Haven, bound for Mexico.

Several times, when returning from the village at ten or eleven o'clock at night, I heard the tread of a flock of geese, or perhaps ducks, on the dry leaves in the woods near a pond-hole behind my dwelling, where they had come up to feed, and the faint honk or quack of their leader as they hurried off. In 1845 Walden froze entirely over for the first time on the night of the 22d of December, Flint's and other shallower ponds and the river having been frozen ten days or more; in '46, the 16th; in '49, about the 31st; and in '50, about the 27th of December; in '52, the 5th of January; in '53, the 31st of December. The snow had already covered the ground since the 25th of November, and surrounded me suddenly with the scenery of winter.

I withdrew yet farther into my shell, and endeavored to keep a bright fire both within my house and within my breast. My employment out of doors now was to collect the dead wood in the forest, bringing it in my hands or on my shoulders, or sometimes trailing a dead pine tree under each arm to my shed. An old forest fence which had seen its best days was a great haul for me. I sacrificed it to Vulcan, for it was past serving the god Terminus. How much more interesting an event is that man's supper who has just been forth in the snow to hunt, nay, you might say, steal, the fuel to cook it with! His bread and meat are sweet. There are enough faggots and waste wood of all kinds in the forests of most of our towns to support many fires, but which at present warm none, and, some think, hinder the growth of the young wood. There

was also the driftwood of the pond. In the course of the summer I had discovered a raft of pitch-pine logs with the bark on, pinned together by the Irish when the railroad was built. This I hauled up partly on the shore. After soaking two years and then lying high six months it was perfectly sound, though waterlogged past drying.

I amused myself one winter day with sliding this piece-meal across the pond, nearly half a mile, skating behind with one end of a log fifteen feet long on my shoulder, and the other on the ice; or I tied several logs together with a birch withe, and then, with a longer birch or alder which had a hook at the end, dragged them across. Though completely waterlogged and almost as heavy as lead, they not only burned long, but made a very hot fire; nay, I thought that they burned better for the soaking, as if the pitch, being confined by the water, burned longer as in a lamp.

Gilpin, in his account of the forest borderers of England, says that "the encroachments of trespassers, and the houses and fences thus raised on the borders of the forest," were "considered as great nuisances by the old forest law, and were severely punished under the name of *purprestures,* as tending *ad terrorem ferarum — ad nocumentum forestæ,*" etc., to the frightening of the game and the detriment of the forest. But I was interested in the preservation of the venison and the vert more than the hunters or wood-choppers, and as much as though I had been the Lord Warden himself; and if any part was burned, though I burned it myself by accident, I grieved

with a grief that lasted longer and was more inconsolable than that of the proprietors; nay, I grieved when it was cut down by the proprietors themselves.

I would that our farmers when they cut down a forest felt some of that awe which the old Romans did when they came to thin, or let in the light to, a consecrated grove (*lucum conlucare*), that is, would believe that it is sacred to some god. The Roman made an expiatory offering, and prayed, "Whatever god or goddess thou art to whom this grove is sacred, be propitious to me, my family, and children," etc.

It is remarkable what a value is still put upon wood even in this age and in this new country, a value more permanent and universal than that of gold. After all our discoveries and inventions no man will go by a pile of wood. It is as precious to us as it was to our Saxon and Norman ancestors. If they made their bows of it, we make our gun-stocks of it. Michaux, more than thirty years ago, says that the price of wood for fuel in New York and Philadelphia "nearly equals, and sometimes exceeds, that of the best wood in Paris, though this immense capital annually requires more than three hundred thousand cords, and is surrounded to the distance of three hundred miles by cultivated plains." The Parisian, like his ancestor the Celt, still prizes a bundle of faggots, though he must go further for them. In this town the price of wood rises almost steadily, and the only question is, how much higher it is to be this year than it was the last.

Mechanics and tradesmen who come in person

to the forest on no other errand, are sure to attend the wood auction, and even pay a high price for the privilege of gleaning after the wood-chopper. It is now many years that men have resorted to the forest for fuel and the materials of the arts: the New Englander and the New Hollander, the Parisian and the Celt, the farmer and Robin Hood, Goody Blake and Harry Gill; in most parts of the world the prince and the peasant, the scholar and the savage, equally require still a few sticks from the forest to warm them and cook their food. Neither could I do without them.

Every man looks at his wood-pile with a kind of affection. In winter I loved to have mine before my window, and the more chips the better to remind me of my pleasing work. I had an old axe which nobody claimed, with which by spells in winter days, on the sunny side of the house, I played about the stumps which I had got out of my bean-field. As my driver prophesied when I was ploughing, they warmed me twice, once while I was splitting them, and again when they were on the fire, so that no fuel could give out more heat, and better serve a rich poor man like myself. As for the axe, I was advised to get the village blacksmith to "jump" it; but I jumped him, and, putting a hickory helve from the woods into it, made it do. If it was dull, it was at least hung true.

A few pieces of fat pine were a great treasure. It is interesting to remember how much of this food for fire is still concealed in the bowels of the earth. In previous years I had often gone

"prospecting" over some bare hillside, where a pitch-pine wood had formerly stood, and got out the fat pine roots. They are almost indestructible.

Stumps thirty or forty years old, at least, will still be sound at the core, though the sapwood has all become vegetable mould, as appears by the scales of the thick bark forming a ring level with the earth four or five inches distant from the heart. With axe and shovel you explore this mine, and follow the marrowy store, yellow as beef tallow, or as if you had struck on a vein of gold, deep into the earth. But commonly I kindled my fire with the dry leaves of the forest, which I had stored up in my shed before the snow came. Green hickory finely split makes the wood-chopper's kindlings, when he has a camp in the woods. Once in a while I got a little of this. The old Dutch settlers on the Hudson used to say of this wood, that dried, it kept fire and sparkled like matches; and their wives preferred its coals because they lasted longer and were not burned in ashes. When the villagers were lighting their fires beyond the horizon, I too gave notice to the various wild inhabitants of Walden vale, by a smoky streamer from my chimney, that I was awake. —

> Light-winged Smoke, Icarian bird,
> Melting thy pinions in thy upward flight,
> Lark without song, and messenger of dawn,
> Circling above the hamlets as thy nest;
> Or else, departing dream, and shadowy form
> Of midnight vision, gathering up thy skirts;
> By night star-veiling, and by day
> Darkening the light and blotting out the sun;
> Go thou my incense upward from this hearth,
> And ask the gods to pardon this clear flame.

Hard green wood just cut, though I used but little of that, answered my purpose better than any other. I sometimes left a good fire when I went to take a walk in a winter afternoon; and when I returned, three or four hours afterward, it would be still alive and glowing. My house was not empty though I was gone. It was as if I had left a cheerful housekeeper behind. It was I and Fire that lived there; and commonly my housekeeper proved trustworthy. One day, however, as I was splitting wood, I thought that I would just look in at the window and see if the house was not on fire; it was the only time I remember to have been particularly anxious on this score; so I looked and saw that a spark had caught my bed, and I went in and extinguished it when it had burned a place as big as my hand. It was a mere coincidence. However, my house occupied so sunny and sheltered a position, and its roof was so low that I could afford to let the fire go out in the middle of almost any winter day.

The moles nested in my cellar, nibbling every third potato, and making a snug bed even there, of some hair left after plastering and of brown paper; for even the wildest animals love comfort and warmth as well as man; and they survive the winter only because they are so careful to secure them. Some of my friends spoke as if I was coming to the woods on purpose to freeze myself. The animal merely makes a bed, which he warms with his body, in a sheltered place; but man, having discovered fire, boxes up some air in a spacious apartment, and warms that, instead of

robbing himself, makes that his bed, in which he can move about divested of more cumbrous clothing, maintain a kind of summer in the midst of winter, and by means of windows even admit the light, and with a lamp lengthen out the day. Thus he goes a step or two beyond instinct, and saves a little time for the fine arts. Sometimes, when I went forth for my afternoon walk after a fresh fall of dry snow, a cold driving wind from the north would have followed hard upon it, and the surface of the snow was regularly imbricated with shallow drifts twenty feet wide which from the hills appeared like a great scaly white armor drawn over the earth. Under the waves of this snowy ocean, railroad and highway, meadow and river and pond, pastures and cultivated fields, and almost all traces of man's occupancy of the globe, were concealed, and I felt as if I were the last man. Though, when I had been exposed to the rudest blasts a long time, my hands and feet became numb, my ears and face stiffened, and my whole body began to grow torpid, when I reached the genial atmosphere of my house I soon recovered my faculties and prolonged my life. But the most luxuriously housed has little to boast of in this respect, nor need we trouble ourselves to speculate how the human race may be at last destroyed. It would be easy to cut their threads any time with a little sharper blast from the north. We go on dating from Cold Fridays and Great Snows; but a little colder Friday, or greater snow, would put a period to man's existence on the globe.

The next winter I used a small cooking-stove

for economy, since I did not own the forest; but it did not keep fire so well as the open fireplace. Cooking was then, for the most part, no longer a poetic, but merely a chemic process. It will soon be forgotten, in these days of stoves, that we used to roast potatoes in the ashes, after the Indian fashion. The stove not only took up room and scented the house, but it concealed the fire, and I felt as if I had lost a companion. You can always see a face in the fire. The laborer, looking into it at evening, purifies his thoughts of the dross and earthiness which they have accumulated during the day. But I could no longer sit and look into the fire, and the pertinent words of a poet recurred to me with new force. —

"Never, bright flame, may be denied to me
Thy dear, life imaging, close sympathy.
What but my hopes shot upward e'er so bright?
What but my fortunes sunk so low in night?

Why art thou banished from our hearth and hall,
Thou who art welcomed and beloved by all?
Was thy existence then too fanciful
For our life's common light, who are so dull?
Did thy bright gleam mysterious converse hold
With our congenial souls? secrets too bold?

Well, we are safe and strong, for now we sit
Beside a hearth where no dim shadows flit,
Where nothing cheers nor saddens, but a fire
Warms feet and hands — nor does to more aspire;
By whose compact utilitarian heap
The present may sit down and go to sleep,
Nor fear the ghosts who from the dim past walked,
And with us by the unequal light of the old wood-fire
talked."

NOTE TO CHAPTER XIII

The verses at the end of this chapter are from a poem on "The Wood-Fire," in *The Dial* for 1840, ascribed to Caroline Sturgis, one of two gifted sisters, daughters of William Sturgis, of Boston. Ellen (Mrs. R. W. Hooper) was the more gifted, and better known in Boston; but Caroline (Mrs. Tappan) long outlived her, and was better known in Concord, where she often visited. In Thoreau's MS. before the lines above quoted, occur the beginning lines from *The Dial*, thus: —

When I am glad or gay,
Let me walk forth into the brilliant sun,
And with congenial rays be shone upon:
When I am sad, or thought-bewitched would be,
Let me glide forth in moonlight's mystery.
But never, while I live this changeful life,
This Past and Future with all wonders rife,
Never, bright flame, may be denied to me, etc.

CHAPTER XIV — FORMER INHABITANTS AND WINTER VISITORS

I WEATHERED some merry snow-storms, and spent some cheerful winter evenings by my fireside, while the snow whirled wildly without, and even the hooting of the owl was hushed. For many weeks I had scarcely a visitor and met no one in my walks but those who came occasionally to cut wood and sled it to the village. The elements, however, abetted me in making a path through the deepest snow in the woods, for when I had once gone through the wind blew the oak leaves into my tracks, where they lodged, and by absorbing the rays of the sun melted the snow, and so not only made a dry bed for my feet, but in the night their dark line was my guide.

For human society I was obliged to conjure up the spirits of former inhabitants of these woods. Within the memory of many of my townsmen the woodland road near which my house stands resounded with the laugh and gossip of inhabitants, and the woods which border it were notched and dotted here and there with their little gardens and dwellings, though it was then much darker and more shut in by the forest than now. In many places, within my own remembrance, the pines would scrape both sides of a chaise at once, and women and children who

were compelled to go this way to Lincoln [1] alone and on foot did it with fear, and often ran a good part of the distance. Though mainly but a humble route to neighboring villages, or for the woodman's team, it once amused the traveller more than now by its variety, and lingered longer in his memory. Where now firm open fields stretch from the village to the woods, it then ran through a maple swamp on a foundation of logs, the remnants of which, doubtless, still underlie the present dusty highway, from the Stratton, now the Alms House, Farm, to Brister's Hill.

East of my bean-field,[2] across the road, lived

[1] The shorter road from Concord village to Lincoln, the next town south-east, runs through the Walden woods and skirts the Pond, which lies partly in Lincoln. It was not the oldest road, but a makeshift of later times for access to the woods and the ponds, and naturally became the abode of denizens who rather shunned publicity, like the freed slaves of the 18th century, and white persons who had an affinity more than normal for ardent spirits. Something of the same inhabitation prevailed along the Old Marlboro Road, on the other side of the Walden woods, and running through the Sudbury woods. — F. B. S.

[2] Thoreau's bean-field was the sandy pasture afterward planted by him with pines for Emerson, who owned it. Those pines have been ravaged by fire, and are now mostly gone. Duncan Ingraham, Cato's master, was a sea captain and Surinam merchant, who had made a fortune and retired to live on it in Concord village, near where the Library now stands. He was an ancestor of Captain Marryat, the novelist, and of Captain Ingraham, of the U. S. navy, who distinguished himself by refusing to give up a Hungarian refugee on board his vessel in 1854. Cato was one of the slaves, — in which Ingraham occasionally dealt; when he married, his master freed

Cato Ingraham, slave of Duncan Ingraham, Esquire, gentleman, of Concord village, who built his slave a house, and gave him permission to live in Walden Woods; — Cato, not Uticensis, but Concordiensis. Some say that he was a Guinea Negro. There are a few who remember his little patch among the walnuts, and the trees which he let grow up till he should be old and need them; but a younger and whiter speculator got them at last. He too, however, occupies an equally narrow house at present. Cato's half obliterated cellar hole still remains, though known to few, being concealed from the traveller by a fringe of pines. It is now filled with the smooth sumach (*Rhus glabra*), and one of the earliest species of golden rod (*Solidago stricta*) grows there luxuriantly.

Here, by the very corner of my field, still nearer to town, Zilpha, a colored woman, had her little house, where she spun linen for the townsfolk, making the Walden woods ring with her shrill singing, for she had a loud and notable voice.

him and he went to live near Walden. He died in 1805, and his master died in 1811.

Ingraham was a Tory in the early years of our Revolution, as were the grandmother and great-uncles of Thoreau; and he may have aided in the escape of Dr. Jones, one of those uncles, from the Concord Gaol in the summer of 1775. His was also one of the houses in which Sir Archibald Campbell visited, while a prisoner on parole in Concord in 1776–77. Ingraham became reconciled to independence before the war ended, and his large property was never confiscated, as was the small estate of Daniel Bliss, a great-uncle of Emerson, living in Concord. — F. B. S.

At length, in the war of 1812,[1] her dwelling was set on fire by English soldiers, prisoners on parole, when she was away, and her cat, and dog, and hens were all burned up together. She led a hard life, and somewhat inhumane. One old frequenter of these woods remembers, that as he passed her house one noon he heard her muttering to herself over her gurgling pot — "Ye are all bones, bones!" I have seen bricks amid the oak copse there.

Down the road, on the right hand, on Brister's Hill, lived Brister Freeman, "a handy Negro," slave of Squire Cummings once — there where grow still the apple trees which Brister planted and tended; large old trees now, but their fruit still wild and ciderish to my taste. Not long since I read his epitaph in the old Lincoln burying-ground, a little on one side, near the unmarked graves of some British grenadiers, who fell in the retreat from Concord, — where he is styled "Sippio Brister,"[2] — Scipio Africanus he had

[1] Concord was an inland town, and therefore chosen for the residence of paroled prisoners in our two wars with England, while awaiting their exchange. Among those received in the war of 1812 were some of the officers and sailors of the *Guerrière*, captured by "Old Ironsides" not far from the Massachusetts coast; and these may have been the incendiaries of poor Zilpha's cottage. — F. B. S.

[2] Brister, who gave his name to the hill and the spring of his region, has a much longer local record than Cato, the Guinea captive. His master, "Squire Cummings," was a Scotchman by parentage, and a physician by profession, — the son of Robert Comyn, who was concerned in the Stuart rebellion of 1715, and migrated to Boston, and then to Concord, where Dr. Cummings was born and

some title to be called, — "a man of color," as if he were discolored. It also told me, with staring emphasis, when he died; which was but an indirect way of informing me that he ever lived. With him dwelt Fenda, his hospitable wife, who told fortunes, yet pleasantly, — large, round, and black, blacker than any of the children of night, such a dusky orb as never rose on Concord before or since.

And farther down the hill, on the left, on the old road in the woods, are marks of some homestead of the Stratton family; whose orchard once covered all the slope of Brister's Hill, but was long since killed out by pitch-pines, excepting a few stumps, whose old roots furnish still the wild stocks of many a thrifty village tree.

Nearer yet to town, you come to Breed's location, on the other side of the way, just on the

practised his profession; dying in 1788, and leaving bequests to Concord and to Harvard College, where at the age of twenty-one he graduated, — or rather got an honorary degree, in 1749.

Brister was probably born about that time, and long survived his master. He was an active and thrifty negro, but the victim of those rude jokes that men often play on his race. The town butcher, Peter Wheeler, having a ferocious bull to slaughter, was rather afraid to bring him to the bull-ring. Seeing Brister passing his place on his way from Walden, Wheeler asked him to go into the slaughter-house and bring an axe, — with which he should have a job to do. He entered, unsuspecting, and the bull came at him, — then, finding the axe, he bravely defended himself and finally slew the bull. But when he came out, full of horror and indignation, he fled to his woods without waiting to be paid. His wife, Fenda (and perhaps himself as well), was a Guinea negro. — F. B. S.

edge of the wood; ground famous for the pranks of a demon not distinctly named in old mythology, but who has acted a prominent and astounding part in our New England life, and deserves, as much as any mythological character, to have his biography written one day; who first comes in the guise of a friend or hired man, and then invariably robs and murders the whole family — New England Rum. But history must not yet tell the tragedies enacted here; let time intervene in some measure to assuage and lend an azure tint to them. Here the most indistinct and dubious tradition says that once a tavern stood; the well the same, which tempered the traveller's beverage and refreshed his steed. Here then men saluted one another, and heard and told the news, and went their ways again.

Breed's [1] hut was standing only a dozen years ago, just on the edge of the road, though it had long been unoccupied. It was about the size of mine. It was set on fire by mischievous boys, one Election night, if I do not mistake. I lived on the edge of the village then, and had just lost myself over Davenant's Gondibert, that winter that I labored with a lethargy — which, by the way, I never knew whether to regard as a family complaint (having an uncle [2] who goes to sleep

[1] Breed was the barber mentioned in a former chapter; his vice was drink, and he had been dead for years when this fire occurred. It was his son, also a toper, whom Thoreau found at the ruins of the hut the next day. — F. B. S.

[2] Charles Dunbar, the oldest child of the Rev. Asa and Mary Jones Dunbar, the grandparents of Thoreau, is the

shaving himself, and is obliged to sprout potatoes in a cellar Sundays, in order to keep awake and keep the Sabbath), or as the consequence of my attempt to read Chalmers' collection of English poetry without skipping. It fairly overcame my Nervii. I had just sunk my head on this when the bells rang fire, and in hot haste the engines rolled that way, led by a straggling troop of men and boys, and I among the foremost, for I had leaped the brook. We thought it was far south over the woods — we who had run to fires before — barn, shop, or dwelling-house, or all together. "It 's Baker's barn!" cried one. "It is the Codman Place!" affirmed another. And then fresh sparks went up above the wood, as if the roof fell in, and we all shouted "Concord to the rescue!" Wagons shot past with furious speed and crushing loads, bearing, perchance, among the rest, the agent of the Insurance Company, who was bound to go, however far; and ever and anon the engine bell tinkled behind, more slow and sure, and rearmost of all, as it was afterward whispered, came they who set the fire and gave the alarm.

Thus we kept on like true idealists, rejecting the evidence of our senses, until at a turn in the road we heard the crackling and actually felt the heat of the fire from over the wall, and realized, alas! that we were there. The very nearness of the fire but cooled our ardor. At first we thought

uncle referred to. He has been described in the Journal, and was well known in Concord, though he did not live there. I remember meeting him at Mrs. Thoreau's house, where his three sisters were living in 1855–56. He had the humor without the refinement of Thoreau. — F. B. S.

to throw a frog-pond on to it; but concluded to let it burn, it was so far gone and so worthless. So we stood around our engine, jostled one another, expressed our sentiments through speaking-trumpets, or in lower tone referred to the great conflagrations which the world has witnessed, including Bascom's shop, and, between ourselves, we thought that, were we there in season with our "tub," and a full frog-pond by, we could turn that threatened last and universal one into another flood.

We finally retreated without doing any mischief, — without the prospect of a civil card or of hot chocolate, — returned to sleep and *Gondibert*. But as for *Gondibert*, I would except that passage in the preface about wit being the soul's powder, — "but most of mankind are strangers to wit, as Indians are to powder."

It chanced that I walked that way across the fields the following night, about the same hour, and hearing a low moaning at this spot, I drew near in the dark, and discovered the only survivor of the family that I know, the heir of both its virtues and its vices, who alone was interested in this burning, lying on his stomach and looking over the cellar wall at the still smouldering cinders beneath, muttering to himself, as is his wont. He had been working far off in the river meadows all day, and had improved the first moments that he could call his own to visit the home of his fathers and his youth. He gazed into the small cellar from all sides and points of view by turns, — always lying down to it, — as if there was some treasure, which he remembered, concealed

between the stones, where there was absolutely nothing but a heap of bricks and ashes. The house being gone, he looked at what there was left. He was soothed by the sympathy which my mere presence implied, and showed me, as well as the darkness permitted, where the well was covered up; which, thank Heaven, could never be burned; and he groped long about the wall to find the well-sweep which his father had cut and mounted, feeling for the iron hook or staple by which a burden had been fastened to the heavy end — all that he could now cling to — to convince me that it was no common "rider." I felt it, and still remark it almost daily in my walks, for by it hangs the history of a family.[1]

[1] Here were omitted these two passages:

"I have even thought to make a drawing of it for the Smithsonian Institution; for it has a peculiar curve, not paralleled by any that I know, — whether it was so designed by the maker, or got a twist in the September Gale."

"Wells must be among the oldest monuments of man on the globe. The white man hereabouts still resorts to springs which were stoned up by the Indians. Little does the country squire think of this when he encloses one within a costly curb. One must forget himself and his age to remember how old may be the most ancient well which men use today, — coeval, almost, with the race. So, from the first, poets have derived their inspiration from a few old wells on the mountain of the Muses. Few dig anew, though some drink deeper than their brethren. But I trust that in this new country many wells are to be dug."

The "country squire" was S. G. Wheeler, who for a time owned the Nashawtuck farm, and whose costly well-curb may still be seen near Massachusetts Avenue west of the river. — F. B. S.

Once more, on the left, where are seen the well and lilac bushes by the wall, in the now open field, lived Nutting and Le Grosse. But to return toward Lincoln.

Farther in the woods than any of these, where the road approaches nearest to the pond, Wyman the potter squatted, and furnished his townsmen with earthenware, and left descendants to succeed him. Neither were they rich in worldly goods, holding the land by sufferance while they lived; and there often the sheriff came in vain to collect the taxes, and "attached a chip," for form's sake, as I have read in his accounts, there being nothing else that he could lay his hands on.

One day in midsummer, when I was hoeing, a man who was carrying a load of pottery to market stopped his horse against my field and inquired concerning Wyman the younger. He had long ago bought a potter's wheel of him, and wished to know what had become of him. I had read of the potter's clay and wheel in Scripture, but it had never occurred to me that the pots we use were not such as had come down unbroken from those days, or had grown on trees like gourds, and I was pleased to hear that so fictile an art was ever practised in my neighborhood.

The last inhabitant of these woods before me was an Irishman, Hugh Quoil (if I have spelt his name with coil enough), who occupied Wyman's tenement — Col. Quoil,[1] he was called.

[1] This Hugh Quoil was probably named Cahill in Ireland; he may have been a sergeant at Waterloo, — certainly not a colonel. In his time in Concord few of the Irish peasantry had come over to the rural towns, and

Rumor said that he had been a soldier at Waterloo. If he had lived I should have made him fight his battles over again. His trade here was that of a ditcher. Napoleon went to St. Helena; Quoil came to Walden woods. All I know of him is tragic. I have noticed that there is always something pathetic in the sedentary life of men who have travelled. I remember him as a man of manners, like one who had seen the world, and was capable of more civil speech than you could well attend to. He wore a great coat in midsummer, being affected with a strange trembling delirium, and his face was the color of carmine. He died in the road at the foot of Brister's Hill shortly after I came to the woods, and "there he lay," as one who found him said, looking better than in life. Before his house was pulled down, when his comrades avoided it as "an unlucky

if an Irishman appeared he was likely to have been a discharged or deserted soldier, a printer, or some skilled but shiftless mechanic.

A contemporary of Cahill, but an English tailor, had been in the British navy and seen Napoleon at St. Helena; then he came to Concord and practised his trade there. His children were perhaps pupils of Thoreau, — certainly of Ellen Fuller, the wife of Thoreau's friend Channing.

Wyman, the potter, in whose house Cahill died, is sufficiently described by Thoreau. A neighborhood so tenanted by "ne'er-do-weels" is still almost vacant of inhabitants, although houses are creeping up towards the foot of Brister's Hill.

Speaking of Cahill in an omitted passage, Thoreau says, "I have noticed that there is always something pathetic in the sedentary life of persons who have travelled." Thus he gives the prose moral of Tennyson's "Ulysses." — F. B. S.

castle," I visited it. There lay his old clothes curled up by habit, as if they were himself, upon his raised plank bed. His pipe lay broken on the hearth, instead of a bowl broken at the fountain. The last could never have been the symbol of his death, for he confessed to me that, though he had heard of Brister's Spring, he had never seen it; and soiled cards, kings of diamonds, spades, and hearts, were scattered over the floor.

One black chicken which the administrator could not catch, — black as night and as silent — not even croaking, — awaiting Reynard, still went to roost in the next apartment. In the rear there was the dim outline of a garden, which had been planted but had never received its first hoeing, owing to those terrible shaking fits, though it was now harvest time. It was overgrown with Roman wormwood and beggar-ticks, which last stuck to my clothes for all fruit. The skin of a woodchuck was freshly stretched upon the back of the house, a trophy of one of the last battles which he fought; but no warm cap or mittens would he want more.

Now only a dent in the earth marks the site of these dwellings, with buried cellar stones, and strawberries, raspberries, thimble-berries, hazel-bushes, and sumachs growing in the sunny sward there; some pitch-pine or gnarled oak occupies what was the chimney-nook, and a sweet-scented black-birch, perhaps, waves where the door-stone was. Sometimes the well dent is visible, where once a spring oozed; now dry and tearless grass; or it was covered deep — not to be discovered till some late day — with a flat stone under the

sod, when the last of the race departed. What a sorrowful act must that be — the covering up of wells! coincident with the opening of wells of tears.

These cellar dents, like deserted fox-burrows, old holes, are all that is left where once were the stir and bustle of human life, and "fate, free-will, fore-knowledge absolute," in some form and dialect or other were by turns discussed. But all I can learn of their conclusions amounts to just this, that "Cato and Brister pulled wool;" which is about as edifying as the history of more famous schools of philosophy.

Still grows the vivacious lilac a generation after the door and lintel and sill are gone, unfolding still its sweet-scented flowers each spring, to be plucked by the musing traveller; planted and tended once by children's hands, in front-yard plots — now standing by wall-sides in retired pastures, and giving place to new-rising forests; — the last of that stirp, sole survivor of that family. Little did the dusky children think that the puny slip with its two eyes only, which they stuck in the ground in the shadow of the house and daily watered, would root itself so, and outlive them, and house itself in the rear that shaded it, and grown man's garden and orchard, and tell their story faintly to the lone wanderer a half century after they had grown up and died, — blossoming as fair, and smelling as sweet, as in that first spring. I mark its still tender, civil, cheerful, lilac colors.

But this small village, germ of something more, why did it fail while Concord keeps its ground?

Were there no natural advantages, — no water privileges, forsooth? Ay, the deep Walden Pond and cool Brister's Spring, — privilege to drink long and healthy draughts at these, all unimproved by these men but to dilute their glass. They were universally a thirsty race. Might not the basket, stable-broom, mat-making, corn-parching, linen-spinning, and pottery business have thrived here, making the wilderness to blossom like the rose, and a numerous posterity have inherited the land of their fathers? The sterile soil would at least have been proof against a low-land degeneracy. Alas! how little does the memory of these human inhabitants enhance the beauty of the landscape! Again, perhaps, Nature will try, with me for a first settler, and my house raised last spring to be the oldest in the hamlet.

But, thank Heaven, I am not aware that any man has ever built on the spot which I occupy. Deliver me from a city built on the site of a more ancient city, whose materials are ruins, whose gardens cemeteries. The soil is blanched and accursed there, and before that becomes necessary the earth itself will be destroyed. With such reminiscences I repeopled the woods and lulled myself asleep.

In the winter my visitors were few and far between. When the snow lay deepest no wanderer ventured near my house for a week or fortnight at a time, but there I lived as snug as a meadow mouse, or as cattle and poultry which are said to have survived for a long time buried in drifts, even without food; or like that early

settler's family in the town of Sutton, in this State, whose cottage was completely covered by the great snow of 1717 when he was absent, and an Indian found it only by the hole which the chimney's breath made in the drift, and so relieved the family. But no friendly Indian concerned himself about me; nor needed he, for the master of the house was at home.

The Great Snow! How cheerful it is to hear of! When the farmers could not get to the woods and swamps with their teams, and were obliged to cut down the shade trees before their houses to keep their fires a-going, and when the crust was harder cut off the trees in the swamps ten feet from the ground, as it appeared the next spring.

In the deepest snows, the path which I used from the highway to my house, about half a mile long, might have been represented by a meandering dotted line, with wide intervals between the dots. For a week of even weather I took exactly the same number of steps, and of the same length, coming and going, stepping deliberately and with the precision of a pair of dividers in my own deep tracks — to such routine the winter reduces us — yet often they were filled with heaven's own blue. But no weather interfered fatally with my walks, or rather my going abroad, for I frequently tramped eight or ten miles through the deepest snow to keep an appointment with a beech-tree, or a yellow birch, or an old acquaintance among the pines; when the ice and snow causing their limbs to droop, and so sharpening their tops, had changed the pines into fir-trees;

wading to the tops of the highest hills when the snow was nearly two feet deep on a level, and shaking down another snow-storm on my head at every step; or sometimes creeping and floundering thither on my hands and knees, when the hunters had gone into winter quarters. One afternoon I amused myself by watching a barred owl (*Strix nebulosa*) sitting on one of the lower dead limbs of a white pine, close to the trunk, in broad daylight, I standing within a rod of him. He could hear me when I moved and crunched the snow with my feet, but could not plainly see me. When I made the most noise he would stretch out his neck, and erect his neck feathers, and open his eyes wide; but their lids soon fell again, and he began to nod. I too felt a slumberous influence after watching him half an hour, as he sat thus with his eyes half open, like a cat, winged brother of the cat. There was only a narrow slit left between their lids, by which he preserved a peninsular relation to me; thus, with half-shut eyes, looking out from the land of dreams, and endeavoring to realize me, vague object or mote that interrupted his visions. At length, on some louder noise or my nearer approach, he would grow uneasy and sluggishly turn about on his perch, as if impatient at having his dreams disturbed; and when he launched himself off and flapped through the pines, spreading his wings to unexpected breadth, I could not hear the slightest sound from them. Thus, guided amid the pine boughs rather by a delicate sense of their neighborhood than by sight, feeling his twilight way as it were with his sensitive

DEEP SNOW IN WALDEN WOODS BY THE POND

The edge of the Pond is seen at the left

wading to the tops of the highest hills when the snow was nearly two feet deep on a level, and shaking down another snow-storm on my head at every step; or sometimes creeping and floundering thither on my hands and knees, when the hunters had gone into winter quarters. One afternoon I amused myself by watching a barred owl (*Strix nebulosa*) sitting on one of the lower dead limbs of a white pine, close to the trunk, in broad daylight, I standing within a rod of him. He could hear me when I moved and crunched the snow with my feet, but could not plainly see me. When I made the most noise he would stretch out his neck, and erect his neck feathers, and open his eyes wide; but their lids soon fell again, and he began to nod. I too felt a slumberous influence after watching him half an hour, as he sat thus with his eyes half open, like a cat, winged brother of the cat. There was only a narrow slit left between their lids, by which he preserved a peninsular relation to me; thus, with half-shut eyes, looking out from the land of dreams, and endeavoring to realize me, vague object or mote that interrupted his visions. At length, on some louder noise or my nearer approach, he would grow uneasy and sluggishly turn about on his perch, as if impatient at having his dreams disturbed, and when he launched himself off and flapped through the pines, spreading his wings to unexpected breadth, I could not hear the slightest sound from them. Thus, guided amid the pine boughs rather by a delicate sense of their neighborhood than by sight, feeling his twilight way as it were with his sensitive

pinions, he found a new perch, where he might in peace await the dawning of his day.

As I walked over the long causeway made for the railroad through the meadows, I encountered many a blustering and nipping wind, — for nowhere has it freer play; and when the frost had smitten me on one cheek, heathen as I was, I turned to it the other also. Nor was it much better by the carriage road from Brister's Hill. For I came to town still, like a friendly Indian, when the contents of the broad open fields were all piled up between the walls of the Walden road, and half an hour sufficed to obliterate the tracks of the last traveller. And when I returned new drifts would have formed, through which I floundered, where the busy north-west wind had been depositing the powdery snow round a sharp angle in the road, and not a rabbit's track, nor even the fine print, the small type, of a meadow mouse was to be seen. Yet I rarely failed to find, even in midwinter, some warm and springy swamp where the grass and the skunk-cabbage still put forth with perennial verdure, and some hardier bird occasionally awaited the return of spring.

Sometimes, notwithstanding the snow, when I returned from a floundering walk at evening I crossed the deep tracks of a wood-chopper,[1] lead-

[1] The wood-chopper, of course, was Alexander Therien, much mentioned before. The "long-headed farmer" was Edmund Hosmer, a native of Concord, who had lived in Quincy and had seen the first President Adams at church there; then returned to his native town, and was now living on the Cambridge Turnpike, or a little off from that, along which his well-tilled farm extended. This

ing from my door, and found his pile of whittlings on the hearth, and my house filled with the odor of his pipe. Or on a Sunday afternoon, if I chanced to be at home, I heard the crunching of the snow made by the step of a long-headed farmer, who from far through the woods sought my house, to have a social "crack;" one of the few of his vocation who are "men on their farms;" who donned a frock instead of a professor's gown, and is as ready to extract the moral out of church or state as to haul a load of manure from his barnyard. We talked of rude and simple times, when men sat about large fires in cold, bracing weather, with clear heads; and when other dessert failed, we tried our teeth on many a nut which wise squirrels have long since abandoned, for those which have the thickest shells are commonly empty.

The one who came from farthest to my lodge, through deepest snows and most dismal tempests,

made him one of Thoreau's nearest neighbors, by a woodland path often traversed by the "Walkers" of Concord, — Emerson, Alcott, Channing and Thoreau, — to whom I joined myself in 1855. It was in one of his houses that the Alcotts found shelter on returning from Harvard in 1844–45; and soon after, George Curtis and his brother Burrill lived there for a time. Mr. Hosmer long outlived Thoreau, and kept up his friendship with the family to the last. By 1855 he was the owner of an old house on what was once the farm of John Winthrop, and there passed the last years of his industrious life. Another and still older house on the Winthrop, or Hunt, farm was sought by Daniel Ricketson, but it was never occupied by him; it was soon torn down by Mr. Hosmer. — F. B. S.

was a poet.[1] A farmer, a hunter, a soldier, a reporter, even a philosopher, may be daunted; but nothing can deter a poet, for he is actuated

[1] The next three pages have often been quoted, because they speak of two intimate members of the Concord fraternity of authors, — Ellery Channing and Bronson Alcott. The first-named was also introduced in *The Week*, and was Thoreau's most beloved friend, outside of his domestic circle. During the Walden episode (as already mentioned), Channing was living three miles north of Walden, — but, accustomed to long walks in all weathers, he made nothing of the six-mile detour which brought him to the cabin in the Emerson pine-wood.

The account of Alcott was much re-written. Earlier forms of it show these changes: —

"Alcott is a geometer, a visionary, the Laplace of ethics; more intellect, less of the affections, sight beyond talents; a substratum of practical skill and knowledge unquestionable, but overlaid and concealed by a faith in the unseen and impracticable. Seeks to realize an entire life; a catholic observer; habitually takes in the farthest star and nebula into his scheme. Will be the last man to be disappointed as the ages revolve. His attitude is one of greater faith and expectation than that of any man I know; with little to show; with undue share (for a philosopher) of the weaknesses of humanity. The most hospitable intellect, embracing high and low. For children, how much that means! for the insane and vagabond, — for the poet and scholar."

These were notes made before the Walden life, and having reference to the Fruitlands episode, of which Thoreau had much knowledge. Again he wrote, — "When Alcott's day comes, laws unsuspected by most will take effect; the system will crystallize according to them; all scales and falsehood will slough off; everything will be in its place."

There were other slight changes before Thoreau sat down to give his finished picture of Alcott, whose conversations he attended in Boston as well as in Concord,

by pure love. Who can predict his comings and goings? His business calls him out at all hours, even when doctors sleep. We made that small house ring with boisterous mirth and resound with the murmur of much sober talk, making amends then to Walden vale for the long silences. Broadway was still and deserted in comparison. At suitable intervals there were regular salutes of laughter, which might have been referred indifferently to the last uttered or the forthcoming jest. We made many a "bran new" theory of life over a dish of gruel, which combined the advantages of conviviality with the clear-headedness which philosophy requires.

I should not forget that during my last winter at the pond there was another welcome visitor, who at one time came from the village, through snow, and rain, and darkness, till he saw my lamp through the trees, and shared with me some long winter evenings. Also one of the last of the philosophers — Connecticut gave him to the world — he peddled first her wares; afterwards, as he declares, his brains, with nothing to show for his pains, without special talents, — he lives still, prompting God and disgracing man, bearing for fruit his brain only, like the nut its kernel.

and with whom, in 1856, he went to call on Walt Whitman in Brooklyn.

The other person, — "one other, with whom I had 'solid seasons,' long to be remembered," at his house in the village was Emerson, whose portrait Thoreau never appears to have drawn so carefully as those of Alcott and Channing. Hawthorne seldom or never called on Thoreau at his hermitage. — F. B. S.

I think that he must be the man of the most faith of any alive. His words and attitude always suppose a better state of things than other men are acquainted with, and it is one of his merits that he will be the last man to be disappointed as the ages revolve, for he anticipates more than any. It will be hard to astonish him. He has no venture in the present. But, though comparatively disregarded now, when his day comes, laws unsuspected by most will take effect, and the practical everywhere, masters of families and rulers, will come to him for advice. —

"How blind that cannot see serenitie!"

A true friend of man; almost the only friend of human progress. An Old Mortality, say rather an Immortality, with unwearied patience and faith making plain the fair image engraven in men's bodies, the God of whom they are but defaced and leaning monuments. With his hospitable intellect he embraces children, beggars, insane, and scholars, and entertains the thought of all, adding to it commonly some breadth and elegance. I think that he should keep a caravansary on the world's highway, where philosophers of all nations might put up, and on his sign should be printed, "Entertainment for man, but not for his beast. Enter ye that have leisure and a quiet mind, who earnestly seek the higher road." A thought floats as serenely and as much at home in his mind as a duck pluming herself on a far inland lake. He is perhaps the sanest man and has the fewest crotchets of any I chance to know; the same yesterday and to-morrow. Of yore we

had sauntered and talked, and effectually put the world behind us; for he was pledged to no institution in it, freeborn, *ingenuus*. Whichever way we turned, it seemed that the heavens and the earth had met together, since he enhanced the beauty of the landscape. A blue-robed man, whose fittest roof is the overarching sky which reflects his serenity. I do not see how he can ever die; Nature cannot spare him.

Having each some shingles of thought well dried, we sat and whittled them, trying our knives, and admiring the clear yellowish grain of the pumpkin pine. We waded so gently and reverently, or we pulled together so smoothly, that the fishes of thought were not scared from the stream, nor feared any angler on the bank, but came and went grandly, like the clouds which float peacefully through the western sky, and the mother-o'-pearl flocks which sometimes form and dissolve there. There we worked, revising mythology, rounding a fable here and there, and building castles in the air for which earth offered no worthy foundation. Great Seer! Great Expecter! to converse with whom was a New England Night's Entertainment. Ah! such discourse we had, hermit and philosopher, and the old settler I have spoken of, — we three, — it expanded and racked my little house; I should not dare to say how many pounds' weight there was above the atmospheric pressure on every circular inch; it opened its seams so that they had to be calked with much dulness thereafter to stop the consequent leak — but I had enough of that kind of oakum already picked.

Others there were, one or two with whom I had "solid seasons," long to be remembered, at their houses in the village, and who paid me angel visits, looking in upon me from time to time; but I had no more for society there.

There too, as everywhere, I sometimes expected the Visitor who never comes. The Vishnu Purana says, "The householder is to remain at eventide in his courtyard as long as it takes to milk a cow, or longer if he pleases, to await the arrival of a guest." I often performed this duty of hospitality, waited long enough to milk a whole herd of cows, but did not see the man approaching from the town.

CHAPTER XV — WINTER ANIMALS

When the ponds were firmly frozen, they afforded not only new and shorter routes to many points, but new views from their surfaces of the familiar landscape around them. When I crossed Flint's Pond, after it was covered with snow, though I had often paddled about and skated over it, it was so unexpectedly wide and so strange that I could think of nothing but Baffin's Bay.

The Lincoln hills rose up around me at the extremity of a snowy plain, in which I did not remember to have stood before; and the fishermen, at an indeterminable distance over the ice, moving slowly about with their wolfish dogs, passed for sealers or Esquimaux, or in misty weather loomed like fabulous creatures, and I did not know whether they were giants or pygmies. I took this course when I went to lecture in Lincoln in the evening, travelling in no road and passing no house between my own hut and the lecture-room.

In Goose Pond, which lay in my way, a colony of muskrats dwelt, and raised their cabins high above the ice, though none could be seen abroad when I crossed it. Walden, being like the rest, usually bare of snow, or with only shallow and interrupted drifts on it, was my yard where I

could walk freely when the snow was nearly two feet deep on a level elsewhere and the villagers were confined to their streets. There, far from the village street, and except at very long intervals, from the jingle of sleigh-bells, I slid and skated, as in a vast moose-yard well trodden, overhung by oak woods and solemn pines bent down with snow or bristling with icicles.

For sounds in winter nights, and often in winter days, I heard the forlorn but melodious note of a hooting owl indefinitely far; such a sound seemingly as the frozen earth would yield if struck with a suitable plectrum, the very *lingua vernacula* of Walden Wood, and quite familiar to me at last, though I never saw the bird while it was making it. I seldom opened my door in a winter evening without hearing it; *Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo*, sounded sonorously, and the first three syllables accented somewhat like *how der do;* or sometimes *hoo hoo* only.

One night in the beginning of winter, before the pond froze over, about nine o'clock, I was startled by the loud honking of a goose, and, stepping to the door, heard the sound of their wings like a tempest in the woods as they flew low over my house. They passed over the pond toward Fair Haven, seemingly deterred from settling by my light, their commodore honking all the while with a regular beat. Suddenly an unmistakable cat-owl from very near me, with the most harsh and tremendous voice I ever heard from any inhabitant of the woods, responded at regular intervals to the goose, as if determined to expose and disgrace this intruder from Hud-

son's Bay by exhibiting a greater compass and volume of voice in a native, and *boo-hoo* him out of Concord horizon. What do you mean by alarming the citadel at this time of night consecrated to me? Do you think I am ever caught napping at such an hour, and that I have not got lungs and a larynx as well as yourself? *Boo-hoo, boo-hoo, boo-hoo!* It was the most thrilling discord I ever heard. And yet, if you had a discriminating ear, there were in it the elements of a concord such as these plains never saw nor heard, which

> "Would ruffle up your spirits and put a tongue
> In every *goose's feather*, that should move
> The stones of Walden shore to rise and mutiny."

I also heard the whooping of the ice in the pond, my great bed-fellow in that part of Concord, as if it were restless in its bed and would fain turn over — were troubled with flatulency and bad dreams; or I was waked by the cracking of the ground by the frost, as if someone had driven a team against my door, and in the morning would find a crack in the earth a quarter of a mile long and a third of an inch wide.

Sometimes I heard the foxes as they ranged over the snow crust, in moonlight nights, in search of a partridge or other game, barking raggedly and demoniacally like forest dogs, as if laboring with some anxiety, or seeking expression, struggling for light and to be dogs outright and run freely in the streets; for if we take the ages into our account, may there not be a civilization going on among brutes as well as

men? They seemed to me to be rudimental, burrowing men, still standing on their defence, awaiting their transformation. Sometimes one came near to my window, attracted by my light, barked a vulpine curse at me, and then retreated.

Usually the red squirrel (*Sciurus Hudsonius*) waked me in the dawn, coursing over the roof and up and down the sides of the house, as if sent out of the woods for this purpose. In the course of the winter I threw out half a bushel of ears of sweet corn, which had not got ripe, on to the snow crust by my door, and was amused by watching the motions of the various animals which were baited by it. In the twilight and the night the rabbits came regularly and made a hearty meal. All day long the red squirrels came and went, and afforded me much entertainment by their manœuvres. One would approach at first warily through the shrub-oaks, running over the snow crust by fits and starts like a leaf blown by the wind, now a few paces this way, with wonderful speed and waste of energy, making inconceivable haste with his "trotters," as if it were for a wager, and now as many paces that way, but never getting on more than half a rod at a time; and then suddenly pausing with a ludicrous expression and a gratuitous somerset, as if all the eyes in the universe were fixed on him, — for all the motions of a squirrel, even in the most solitary recesses of the forest, imply spectators as much as those of a dancing girl, — wasting more time in delay and circumspection than would have sufficed to walk the whole distance, — I never saw one walk, — and then sud-

denly, before you could say Jack Robinson, he would be in the top of a young pitch-pine, winding up his clock and chiding all imaginary spectators, soliloquizing and talking to all the universe at the same time, — for no reason that I could ever detect, or he himself was aware of, I suspect.

At length he would reach the corn, and selecting a suitable ear, frisk about in the same uncertain trigonometrical way to the topmost stick of my wood-pile, before my window, where he looked me in the face, and there sat for hours, supplying himself with a new ear from time to time, nibbling at first voraciously and throwing the half-naked cobs about; till at length he grew more dainty still and played with his food, tasting only the inside of the kernel, and the ear, which was held balanced over the stick by one paw, slipped from his careless grasp and fell to the ground, when he would look over at it with a ludicrous expression of uncertainty, as if suspecting that it had life, with a mind not made up whether to get it again, or a new one, or be off; now thinking of corn, then listening to hear what was in the wind.

So the little impudent fellow would waste many an ear in a forenoon; till at last, seizing some longer and plumper one, considerably bigger than himself, and skilfully balancing it, he would set out with it to the woods, like a tiger with a buffalo, by the same zigzag course and frequent pauses, scratching along with it as if it were too heavy for him and falling all the while, making its fall a diagonal between a perpendicular and

horizontal, being determined to put it through at any rate; — a singularly frivolous and whimsical fellow; — and so he would get off with it to where he lived, perhaps carry it to the top of a pine tree forty or fifty rods distant, and I would afterwards find the cobs strewn about the woods in various directions.

At length the jays arrive, whose discordant screams were heard long before, as they were warily making their approach an eighth of a mile off, and in a stealthy, sneaking and cowardly manner they draw near, flitting from tree to tree, nearer and nearer, and pick up the kernels which the squirrels have dropped. Then, sitting on a pitch-pine bough, they attempt to swallow in their haste a kernel which is too big for their throats and chokes them; and after great labor they disgorge it, and then spend an hour in the endeavor to crack it by repeated blows with their bills. They were manifestly thieves, and I had not much respect for them; but the squirrels, though at first shy, went to work as if they were taking what was their own.

Meanwhile also came the chickadees in flocks, and picking up the crumbs which the squirrels had dropped, they flew to the nearest twig, and, placing them under their claws, hammered away at them with their little bills, as if it were an insect in the bark, till they were sufficiently reduced for their slender throats. A little flock of these tit-mice came daily to pick a dinner out of my wood-pile, or the crumbs at my door, with faint flitting lisping notes, like the tinkling of icicles in the grass, or else with sprightly *day*

day day, or more rarely, in spring-like days, a wiry summery *phe-be* from the wood-side. They were so familiar that at length one alighted on an armful of wood which I was carrying in, and pecked at the sticks without fear. I once had a sparrow alight upon my shoulder for a moment while I was hoeing in a village garden, and I felt that I was more distinguished by that circumstance than I should have been by any epaulet I could have worn. The squirrels also grew at last to be quite familiar, and occasionally stepped upon my shoe, when that was the nearest way.

When the ground was not yet quite covered, and again near the end of winter, when the snow was melted on my south hill-side and about my wood-pile, the partridges came out of the woods morning and evening to feed there.

Whichever side you walk in the woods the partridge bursts away on whirring wings, jarring the snow from the dry leaves and twigs on high, which comes sifting down in the sunbeams like golden dust, for this brave bird is not to be scared by winter. It is frequently covered up by drifts, and, it is said, " sometimes plunges from on wing into the soft snow, where it remains concealed for a day or two." I used to start them in the open land also, where they had come out of the woods at sunset to " bud " the wild apple-trees. They will come regularly every evening to particular trees, where the cunning sportsman lies in wait for them, and the distant orchards next the woods suffer thus not a little. If you ask the farmer why he gets no more fruit, he will tell

you it is because his trees are so severely budded by the partridges. I am glad that the partridge gets fed, at any rate. It is Nature's own bird, which lives on buds and diet-drink.

In dark winter mornings, or in short winter afternoons, I sometimes heard a pack of hounds threading all the woods with hounding cry and yelp, unable to resist the instinct of the chase, and the note of the hunting-horn at intervals, proving that man was in the rear. The woods ring again, and yet no fox bursts forth on to the open level of the pond, nor following pack pursuing their Actæon. And perhaps at evening I see the hunters returning with a single brush trailing from their sleigh for a trophy, seeking their inn.

They tell me that if the fox would remain in the bosom of the frozen earth he would be safe, or if he would run in a straight line away no fox-hound could overtake him; but, having left his pursuers far behind, he stops to rest and listen till they come up, and when he runs he circles round to his old haunts, where the hunters await him. Nevertheless he shows considerable cunning, for he will sometimes run upon a wall many rods, and then leap off far to one side, and he appears to know that water will not retain his scent. A hunter told me that he once saw a fox pursued by hounds burst out on to Walden when the ice was covered with shallow puddles, run part way across, and then return to the same shore. Ere long the hounds arrived, but here they lost the scent. Sometimes a pack hunting by themselves would pass my door, and circle

round my house, and yelp and hound without regarding me, as if afflicted by a species of madness, so that nothing could divert them from the pursuit. Thus they circle until they fall upon the recent trail of a fox, for a wise hound will forsake everything else for this.

One day a man came to my hut from Lexington to inquire after his hound that made a large track, and had been hunting for a week by himself.[1] But I fear that he was not the wiser for all I told him; for every time I attempted to answer his questions he interrupted me by asking, "What do you do here?" He had lost a dog, but found a man.[2]

One old hunter who has a dry tongue, who used to come to bathe in Walden once every year when the water was warmest, and at such times looked in upon me, told me that many years ago he took his gun one afternoon, and went out for a cruise in Walden wood; and as he walked the Wayland road, he heard the cry of hounds approaching, and ere long a fox leaped the wall into the road; and as quick as thought leaped the other wall out of the road, and his swift bullet had not touched him. Some way behind

[1] See note (*a*) at end of chapter, p. 187.

[2] The following note by Thoreau, omitted from the printed editions, appears in the MS.: — "I long ago lost a hound, a bay horse, and a turtle-dove, and am still on their trail. Many are the travellers I have spoken concerning them, describing their tracks and what calls they answered to. I have met one or two who had heard the hound, and the tramp of the horse, and even seen the dove disappear behind a cloud, and they seemed as anxious to recover them as if they had lost them themselves."

came an old hound and her three pups in full pursuit, hunting on their own account, and disappeared again in the woods. Late in the afternoon, as he was resting in the thick woods south of Walden, he heard the voice of the hounds far over toward Fair Haven still pursuing the fox; and on they came, their hounding cry which made all the woods ring sounding nearer and nearer; now from Well-Meadow, now from the Baker Farm. For a long time he stood still and listened to their music, so sweet to a hunter's ear, when suddenly the fox appeared, threading the solemn aisles with an easy coursing pace, whose sound was concealed by a sympathetic rustle of the leaves, swift and still, keeping the ground, leaving his pursuers far behind; and, leaping upon a rock amid the woods, he sat erect and listening, with his back to the hunter. For a moment compassion restrained the latter's arm; but that was a short-lived mood, and as quick as thought can follow thought his piece was levelled, and *whang!* — the fox rolling over the rock lay dead on the ground. The hunter still kept his place and listened to the hounds. Still on they came, and now the near woods resounded through all their aisles with their demoniac cry. At length the old hound burst into view with muzzle to the ground, and snapping the air as if possessed, and ran directly to the rock; but spying the fox dead on the ground she suddenly ceased her hounding, as if struck dumb with amazement, and walked round and round him in silence; and one by one her pups arrived, and, like their mother, were sobered into silence by

the mystery. Then the hunter came forward and stood in their midst, and the mystery was solved. They waited in silence while he skinned the fox, then followed the brush a while, and at length turned off into the woods again.

That evening a Weston Squire came to the Concord hunter's cottage to inquire for his hounds, and told how for a week they had been hunting on their own account from Weston woods. The Concord hunter told him what he knew and offered him the skin; but the other declined it and departed. He did not find his hounds that night, but the next day learned that they had crossed the river and put up at a farmhouse for the night, whence, having been well fed, they took their departure early in the morning.

The hunter who told me this could remember one Sam Nutting, who used to hunt bears on Fair Haven Ledges, and exchange their skins for rum in Concord village — who told him, even, that he had seen a moose there. Nutting had a famous fox-hound named Burgoyne — he pronounced it Bugine — which my informant used to borrow. In the "Wast Book" of an old trader of this town, who was also a captain, town-clerk, and representative, I find the following entry: — Jan. 18th, 1742–3, "John Melven Cr. by 1 Grey Fox 0—2—3"; they are not now found here; and in his ledger, Feb. 7th, 1743, Hezekiah Stratton has credit "by ½ a Catt skin 0—1—4½"; of course, a wild-cat, for Stratton was a sergeant in the old French war, and would not have got credit for hunting less noble game. Feb. 14th,

1743, "Aaron Parker, Cr. by 100 squirrel skins, 0—6—3." Credit is given for deer skins also, and they were daily sold, probably to make breeches and mittens of. One man still preserves the horns of the last deer that was killed in this vicinity, and another party has told me the particulars of the hunt in which his uncle was engaged. These are pleasant memorials of the past. The hunters were formerly a numerous and merry crew here. I remember well one gaunt Nimrod who would catch up a leaf by the roadside, and play a strain on it wilder and more melodious, if my memory serves me, than any hunting-horn.

At midnight, when there was a moon, I sometimes met with hounds in my path prowling about the woods, which would skulk out of my way, as if afraid, and stand silent amid the bushes till I had passed.

Squirrels and wild mice disputed for my store of nuts. There were scores of pitch-pines around my house, from one to four inches in diameter, which had been gnawed by mice the previous winter — a Norwegian winter for them, for the snow lay long and deep, and they were obliged to mix a large proportion of pine bark with their other diet. These trees were alive and apparently flourishing at midsummer, and many of them had grown a foot, though completely girdled; but after another winter such were without exception dead.

It is remarkable that a single mouse should thus be allowed a whole pine tree for its dinner, gnawing round instead of up and down it; but

perhaps it is necessary in order to thin these trees, which are wont to grow up densely.

The hares (*Lepus Americanus*) were very familiar. One had her form under my house all winter, separated from me only by the flooring, and she startled me each morning by her hasty departure when I began to stir, — thump, thump, thump, striking her head against the floor timbers in her hurry. They used to come round my door at dusk to nibble the potato parings which I had thrown out, and were so nearly the color of the ground that they could hardly be distinguished when still. Sometimes in the twilight I alternately lost and recovered sight of one sitting motionless under my window. When I opened my door in the evening, off they would go with a squeak and a bounce. Near at hand they only excited my pity. One evening one sat by my door two paces from me, at first trembling with fear, yet unwilling to move; a poor wee thing, lean and bony, with ragged ears and sharp nose, scant tail and slender paws. It looked as if Nature no longer contained the breed of nobler bloods, but stood on her last toes. Its large eyes appeared young and unhealthy, almost dropsical. I took a step, and lo, away it scud [1] with an elastic spring over the snow crust, straightening its

[1] The date of the rabbit's scudding away was February 22, 1846. He is called Jean Lapin, after La Fontaine. In the night-time, he says elsewhere, "The rabbits roam the fields and woods without fear. We associate wildness with the night, and silence; but the repose is never complete. Nature has her watchmen, who are links connecting the days of animated life." — F. B. S.

body and its limits into graceful length, and soon put the forest between me and itself — the wild free venison, asserting its vigor and the dignity of Nature. Not without reason was its slenderness. Such then was its nature. (*Lepus, levipes*, lightfoot, some think.)

What is a country without rabbits and partridges? They are among the most simple and indigenous animal products; ancient and venerable families known to antiquity as to modern times; of the very hue and substance of Nature, nearest allied to leaves and to the ground — and, moreover, to one another; it is either winged or it is legged. It is hardly as if you had seen a wild creature when a rabbit or a partridge bursts away, only a natural one, as much to be expected as rustling leaves.

The partridge and the rabbit are still sure to thrive, like true natives of the soil, whatever revolutions occur. If the forest is cut off, the sprouts and bushes which spring up afford them concealment, and they become more numerous than ever. That must be a poor country indeed that does not support a hare. Our woods teem with them both, and around every swamp may be seen the partridge or rabbit-walk, beset with twiggy fences and horse-hair snares, which some cowboy tends.

(*a*) The "man from Lexington" who came to inquire after his hound amused Thoreau greatly by his curiosity, and in a fragment of the Journal for 1846, he thus details the conversation:

Hunter. — "Have you seen my hound, sir? (looking round him); I want to know! what? a lawyer's office?

law books? want to know if you 've seen anything of a hound about here? Why, what do you do here?"

Thoreau. — "I live here. No, I have n't."

H. — "Have n't you heard one in the woods anywhere?"

T. — "Oh yes, — I heard one this evening, — (*H.* — "What do you do here?") but he was some way off."

H. — "Which side did he seem to be?"

T. — "Well, I should think he was the other side of the pond."

H. — "This is a large dog, — makes a large track. He 's been out hunting from Lexington for a week. How long have you lived here?"

T. — "Oh, about a year."

H. — "Somebody said there was a man up here had a camp in the woods somewhere, and he 'd got him" (the hound).

T. — "Well, I don't know of anybody. There 's Britton's camp over on the other road; it may be there."

H. — "Is n't there anybody in these woods?"

T. — "Yes, they are chopping right up here behind me."

H. — "How far is it?"

T. — "Only a few steps, — hark a moment; there, don't you hear the sound of their axes?"

Therien was one of these nearby choppers. Britton's camp was on the other road from Concord to Lincoln, then heavily wooded on both sides, near Flint's pond. Britton was a dealer in wood and timber, for whom Ellery Channing had cut wood a few winters earlier, as described in his poem, "The Woodman," which gave a title to the thin volume in which "Baker Farm" was first printed.

In the first passage about foxes in this chapter, the MS. reads, — "A civilization is going on among brutes as well as men. Foxes are forest dogs. I hear one barking tonight, raggedly, wildly, demoniacally in the darkness, — seeking expression, laboring with some anxiety, striving to be a dog outright, that he may carelessly run in the street. He is but a faint man, before there were pygmies, — an imperfect, burrowing man."

This was a favorite fancy of Thoreau, — that the animals were rudimentary men. It was largely these foxes that the hounds were coursing in the Concord and Lincoln woods, adjacent to the less wooded town of Lexington. Weston, mentioned later, is a town on the other side of Lincoln from Concord, which had been the home of Thoreau's grandmother, Mary Jones, before the Revolution, — which broke up the family of her brothers, who were Tories. — F. B. S.

CHAPTER XVI — THE POND IN WINTER

ONCE after a still winter night I awoke with the impression that some question had been put to me, which I had been endeavoring in vain to answer in my sleep, as what — how — when — where? But there was dawning Nature, in whom all creatures live, looking in at my broad windows with serene and satisfied face, and no question on *her* lips. I awoke to an answered question, to Nature and daylight. The snow lying deep on the earth dotted with young pines, and the very slope of the hill on which my house is placed, seemed to say, Forward! Nature puts no question and answers none which we mortals ask. She has long ago taken her resolution.

"O Prince, our eyes contemplate with admiration and transmit to the soul the wonderful and varied spectacle of this universe. The night veils without doubt a part of this glorious creation; but day comes to reveal to us this great work, which extends from earth even into the plains of the ether."

Then to my morning work. First I take an axe and pail and go in search of water, if that be not a dream. After a cold and snowy night it needed a divining rod to find it. Every winter the liquid and trembling surface of the pond, which was so sensitive to every breath, and re-

flected every light and shadow, becomes solid to the depth of a foot or a foot and a half, so that it will support the heaviest teams, and perchance the snow covers it to an equal depth, and it is not to be distinguished from any level field. Like the marmots in the surrounding hills, it closes its eyelids and becomes dormant for three months or more.

Standing on the snow-covered plain, as if in a pasture amid the hills, I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes, pervaded by a softened light as through a window of ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as in summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber twilight sky, corresponding to the cool and even temperament of the inhabitants. Heaven is under our feet as well as over our heads.

Early in the morning, while all things are crisp with frost, men come with fishing reels and slender lunch (men of unquestionable faith), and let down their fine lines through the snowy field, to take pickerel and perch; wisely taught by their instinct (some of them) to follow other fashions and trust other authorities than their townsmen. I do not speak of the fishermen of a day, but wild men, who, by their goings and comings stitch towns together in parts where they would else be ripped, — and, with the hunter race, prevent wild animals from multiplying. They sit to eat their luncheon in stout fear-naughts on the dry oak leaves on the shore of the pond, — as wise

in natural lore as the citizen is in artificial. Their unconscious, yet intimate knowledge of natural history would make a professed naturalist envious. They never consulted with books, and know and can tell much less than they have done. The things these men practise are said not yet to be known.

Here is one fishing for pickerel with grown perch for bait. You look into his pail with wonder, as into a summer pond, — as if he kept summer locked up at home, or knew where she had retreated. How, pray, did he get these in midwinter? O, he got worms out of rotten logs since the ground froze, and so he caught them. His life itself passes deeper in Nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate, — himself a subject for the naturalist. The latter raises the moss and bark gently with his knife in search of insects; the former lays open logs to their core with his axe, and moss and bark fly far and wide. He gets his living by barking trees. Such a man has some right to fish, and I love to see Nature carried out in him. The perch swallows the grub-worm, the pickerel swallows the perch, and the fisherman swallows the pickerel; and so all the chinks and crannies in the scale of being are filled.

Frequently in misty weather I strolled around the pond. I was amused to observe the very primitive mode which some ruder fisherman had adopted. He would perhaps have placed alder branches over the narrow holes in the ice, which were four or five rods apart and an equal distance from the shore, and having fastened the

end of the line to a stick two feet long to prevent its being pulled through, have passed the slack line over a twig of the alder, a foot or more above the ice, and tied a dry oak leaf to it, which, being pulled down, would show when he had a bite. These alder twigs loomed through the mist at regular intervals as I walked half way round the pond.[1]

Ah, the pickerel of Walden! when I see them lying on the ice, or in the well which the fisherman cuts in the ice, making a little hole to admit the water, I am always surprised by their rare beauty, as if they were fabulous fishes; they are so foreign to the streets, even to the woods; foreign as Arabia to our Concord life. They possess a quite dazzling and transcendent beauty, which separates them by a wide interval from the cadaverous cod and haddock whose fame is trumpeted in our streets. They are not green like the pines, nor gray like the stones, nor blue like the sky; but they have, to my eyes, if possible, yet rarer colors, like flowers and precious stones, as if they were the pearls of a great shell, the solidified and animalized *nuclei* or crystals of the Walden water. They, of course, are Walden all over and all through; are themselves small Wal-

[1] Thoreau added to this sketch (to which considerable has now been added from the original MS.) of the native hunter and fisher — a race for whom he had a secret affection — these words: "Here and there, also, about the shore, on the steep wooded hillsides, you see the stone fireplaces, their charred branches, where their predecessors, the Indian fishermen, had cultivated some flame's society, and ate their lunch." — F. B. S.

dens in the animal kingdom, Waldenses.[1] It is surprising that these fishes are caught here — that in this deep and capacious spring, far beneath the rattling teams and chaises and tinkling sleighs that travel the Walden road, this great gold and emerald fish swims. I never chanced to see its kind in any market; it would be the cynosure of all eyes there. Easily, with a few convulsive quirks, they give up their watery ghosts, like a mortal translated before his time to the thin air of Heaven.

As I was desirous to recover the long lost bottom of Walden Pond, I surveyed it carefully, before the ice broke up, early in '46, with compass and chain and sounding line. There have been many stories told about the bottom, or rather no bottom, of this pond, which certainly had no foundation for themselves. It is remarkable how long men will believe in the bottomlessness of a pond without taking the trouble to sound it.[2] I have visited two such Bottomless Ponds in one

[1] Here the quaint scholarly fancy was added, — "Waldenses, Dauphins, — eldest sons of Walden; for whose behoof the whole world is but a Delphin edition to study." The allusion is to the books prepared by the Jesuits for the use of the Dauphin of France, grandson of Louis XIV. — *Delphinus serenissimus.* These were styled "Delphin editions." — F. B. S.

[2] After "sound it," Thoreau added in the original MS.: "So it is with many imposing theories, in whose dark waters, concealing the muddy bottom, we see our own faces reflected; whose shallowness could easily be proved by the sounding-line of Reason. I have visited in Sudbury two such 'bottomless' ponds in one week, — not to

week in this neighborhood. Many have believed that Walden reached quite through to the other side of the globe. Some who have lain flat on the ice for a long time, looking down through the illusive medium, perchance with watery eyes into the bargain, and driven to hasty conclusions by the fear of catching cold in their breasts, have seen vast holes "into which a load of hay might be driven," if there were anybody to drive it, the undoubted source of the Styx and entrance to the Infernal Regions from these parts.[1] Others have gone down from the village with a "fifty-six" and a wagon load of inch rope, but yet have failed to find any bottom; for while the "fifty-six" was resting by the way, they were paying out the rope in the vain attempt to fathom their truly immeasurable capacity for marvellousness.

But I can assure my readers that Walden has a reasonably tight bottom at a not unreasonable, though at an unusual depth, notwithstanding a little bilge-water in the hold, and probably a good deal of that has spattered in, or run in over the edge. I fathomed it easily with a cod-line and a stone weighing about a pound and a half, and could tell accurately when the stone left the bottom, by having to pull so much harder before

speak of the theories I have heard advanced. In fact, our imaginations require a depth in the earth, corresponding to the possible height of the Heavens above."—F. B. S.

[1] The following note by the author appears in the original MS.: —

Most men do not see much more in a pond than a certain "natural" who lived on the skirts of the village, who accosted one of my visitors with — "You have been down to the pond. It looked pooty watery, did n't it?"

the water got underneath to help me. The greatest depth was exactly one hundred and two feet; to which may be added the five feet which it has risen since, making one hundred and seven. This is a remarkable depth for so small an area; yet not an inch of it can be spared by the imagination. What if all ponds were shallow? Would it not react on the minds of men? I am thankful that this pond was made deep and pure for a symbol. While men believe in the infinite, some ponds will be thought to be bottomless.

A factory owner, hearing what depth I had found, thought that it could not be true, for, judging from his experience with dams, sand would not lie at so steep an angle. But the deepest ponds are not so deep in proportion to their area as most suppose, and, if drained, would not leave very remarkable valleys. They are not like cups between the hills; for this one, which is so unusually deep for its area, appears in a vertical section through its centre (showing a profile of the bottom, I suppose), not deeper than a shallow plate. Most ponds, being emptied, would leave a meadow no more hollow than we frequently see.

William Gilpin, who is so admirable in all that relates to landscapes, and usually so correct, standing at the head of Loch Fyne, in Scotland, which he describes as "a bay of salt water, sixty or seventy fathoms deep, four miles in breadth," and about fifty miles long, surrounded by mountains, observes, "If we could have seen it immediately after the diluvian crash, or whatever convulsion of nature occasioned it, before

the waters gushed in, what a horrid chasm must it have appeared!

> "So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low
> Down sunk a hollow bottom, broad, and deep,
> Capacious bed of waters ——."

But if, using the shortest diameter of Loch Fyne, we apply these proportions to Walden, which, as we have seen, appears already in a vertical section only like a shallow plate, it will appear four times as shallow.

So much for the *increased* horrors of the chasm of Loch Fyne when emptied. No doubt, many a smiling valley with its stretching cornfields, occupies exactly such a "horrid chasm," from which the waters have receded; though it requires the insight and the far sight of the geologist to convince the unsuspecting inhabitants of the fact. I presume that I have seen many a village situated in the midst of a plain levelled by water, where an inquisitive eye might still detect the shores of a primitive lake in the low horizon hills, and no subsequent elevation of the plain was necessary to conceal their history. But it is easiest, as those who work on the highways know, to find the hollows by the puddles after a shower. The amount of it is, the imagination, give it the least license, dives deeper and soars higher than Nature goes. So, probably, the depth of the ocean will be found to be very inconsiderable compared with its breadth.

As I sounded through the ice I could determine the shape of the bottom with greater accuracy than is possible in surveying harbors which do

not freeze over, and I was surprised at its general regularity. In the deepest part there are several acres more level than almost any field which is exposed to the sun, wind, and plough. In one instance, on a line arbitrarily chosen, the depth did not vary more than one foot in thirty rods; and generally, near the middle, I could calculate the variation for each one hundred feet in any direction beforehand within three or four inches.

Some are accustomed to speak of deep and dangerous holes even in quiet sandy ponds like this, but these would, generally speaking, be contrary to the laws of Nature, the effect of water under these circumstances being to level all inequalities. The regularity of the bottom and its conformity to the shores and the range of the neighboring hills were so perfect that a distant promontory betrayed itself in the soundings quite across the pond, and its direction could be determined by observing the opposite shore. Cape becomes bar, and plain shoal, and valley and gorge deep water and channel.

When I had mapped the pond by the scale of ten rods to an inch, and put down the soundings, more than a hundred in all, I observed this remarkable coincidence, pointing to a general law. Having noticed that the number indicating the greatest depth was apparently in the centre of the map, I laid a rule on the map lengthwise, and then breadthwise, and found, to my surprise, that the line of greatest length intersected the line of greatest breadth *exactly* at the point of greatest depth, notwithstanding that the middle

is so nearly level, the outline of the pond far from regular, and the extreme length and breadth were got by measuring into the coves; and I said to myself, Who knows but this hint would conduct to the deepest part of the ocean as well as of a pond or puddle? Is not this the rule also for the height of mountains, regarded as the opposite of valleys? We know that a hill is not highest at its narrowest part.

Out of five coves, three, or all which had been sounded, were observed to have a bar quite across their mouths and deeper water within, so that the bay tended to be an expansion of water within the land not only horizontally but vertically, and to form a basin or independent pond, the direction of the two capes showing the course of the bar. Every harbor on the sea-coast, also, has its bar at its entrance. In proportion as the mouth of the cove was wider compared with its length, the water over the bar was deeper compared with that in the basin. Given, then, the length and breadth of the cove, and the character of the surrounding shore, and you have almost elements enough to make out a formula for all cases.

In order to see how nearly I could guess, with this experience, at the deepest point in a pond, by observing the outlines of its surface and the character of its shores alone, I made a plan of White Pond, which contains about forty-one acres, and, like this, has no island in it, nor any visible inlet or outlet; and as the line of greatest breadth fell very near the line of least breadth, where two opposite capes approached each other

and two opposite bays receded, I ventured to mark a point a short distance from the latter line, but still on the line of greatest length, as the deepest. The deepest part was found to be within one hundred feet of this, still farther in the direction to which I had inclined, and was only one foot deeper, namely, sixty feet. Of course, a stream running through, or an island in the pond, would make the problem much more complicated.

If we knew all the laws of Nature, we should need only one fact, or the description of one actual phenomenon, to infer all the particular results at that point. As it is, we know only a few laws, though important ones, and our result is vitiated, not, of course, by any confusion or irregularity in Nature, but by our ignorance of essential elements in the calculation. We are wont to confine our notions of law and harmony to those instances only which we detect; but the harmony which results from a far greater number of seemingly conflicting, but really concurring, laws, which we have not detected, is still more wonderful. The particular laws are as our points of view, as, to the traveller, a mountain outline varies with every step, and it has an infinite number of profiles, though absolutely but one form. Even when cleft or bored through it is not comprehended in its entireness.

What I have observed of the pond is no less true in ethics. It is the law of average. Such a rule of the two diameters not only guides us toward the sun in the system and the heart in man, but draw lines through the length and

breadth of the aggregate of a man's particular daily behaviors and waves of life into his coves and inlets, and where they intersect will be the height or depth of his character. Perhaps we need only to know how his shores trend and his adjacent country or circumstances, to infer his depth and concealed bottom, — this experience our daily intercourse supplies, and our instinct is continually applying the rule. If he is surrounded by mountainous circumstances, an Achillean shore, whose peaks overshadow and are reflected in his bosom, they suggest a corresponding depth in him. But a low and smooth shore proves him shallow on that side.

In our bodies, a bold projecting brow falls off to and indicates a corresponding depth of thought. Also there is a bar across the entrance of our every cove, or particular inclination; each is our harbor for a season, in which we are detained and partially land-locked. These inclinations are not whimsical usually, but their form, size, and direction are determined by the promontories of the shore, the ancient axes of elevation. When this bar is gradually increased by storms, tides, or currents, or there is a subsidence of the waters, so that it reaches to the surface, that which was at first but an inclination in the shore in which a thought was harbored, becomes an individual lake cut off from the ocean, as from the central polypus, wherein the thought secures its own conditions, — changes, perhaps, from salt to fresh, — becomes a sweet sea, dead sea, or a marsh. At the advent of each individual into this life, may we not suppose that such a bar has risen

to the surface somewhere and the dry land appeared?

It is true, we are such poor and timid navigators that our thoughts, for the most part, stand off and on upon a harborless coast, are conversant only with the bights of the bays of poesy, or steer for the public ports of entry, and go into the dry docks of science, where they merely refit for this world, and no natural currents concur to individualize them.

As for the inlet or outlet of Walden, I have not discovered any but rain and snow and evaporation, though perhaps, with a thermometer and a sounding line, such places may be found, for where the water flows into the pond it will probably be coldest in summer and warmest in winter. When the ice-men were at work here in '46–47, the cakes sent to the shore were one day rejected by those who were stacking them up there, not being thick enough to lie side by side with the rest; and the cutters thus discovered that the ice over a small space was two or three inches thinner than elsewhere, which made them think that there was an inlet there. They also showed me in another place what they thought was a "leach hole," through which the pond leaked out under a hill into a neighboring meadow, pushing me out on a cake of ice to see it. It was a small cavity under ten feet of water; but I think that I can warrant the pond not to need soldering till they find a worse leak than that. One has suggested that, if such a "leach-hole" should be found, its connection with the meadow, if any existed, might be proved by conveying some

colored powder or sawdust to the mouth of the hole, and then putting a strainer over the spring in the meadow, which would catch some of the particles carried through by the current.

While I was surveying, the ice, which was sixteen inches thick, undulated under a slight wind like water. It is well known that a level cannot be used on ice. At one rod from the shore its greatest fluctuation, when observed by means of a level on land directed toward a graduated staff on the ice, was three-quarters of an inch, though the ice appeared firmly attached to the shore. It was probably much greater in the middle. Who knows but if our instruments were delicate enough we might detect an undulation in the crust of the earth?

When two legs of my level were on the shore and the third on the ice, and the sights were directed over the latter, a rise or fall of the ice of an almost infinitesimal amount made a difference of several feet on a tree across the pond. When I began to cut holes for sounding, there were three or four inches of water on the ice under a deep snow which had sunk it thus far; but the water began immediately to run into these holes, and continued to run for two days in deep streams, which wore away the ice on every side, and contributed essentially, if not mainly, to dry the surface of the pond; for, as the water ran in, it raised and floated the ice. This was somewhat like cutting a hole in the bottom of a ship to let the water out. When such holes freeze, and a rain succeeds, and finally a new freezing

forms a fresh smooth ice over all, it is beautifully mottled internally by dark figures, shaped somewhat like a spider's web, produced by the channels worn by the water flowing from all sides to a centre. This is a very common phenomenon which one of my neighbors calls "ice rosettes." Sometimes, also, when the ice was covered with shallow puddles, I saw a double shadow of myself, one standing on the head of the other — one on the ice, the other on the trees or hillside.

While yet it is cold January, and snow and ice are thick and solid, the prudent landlord comes from the village to get ice to cool his summer drink; impressively, even pathetically, wise, to foresee the heat and thirst of July now in January — wearing a thick coat and mittens! when so many things are not provided for. It may be that he lays up no treasures in this world which will cool his summer drink in the next. He cuts and saws the solid pond, unroofs the house of fishes, and carts off their very element and air, held fast by chains and stakes like corded wood, through the favoring winter air, to wintry cellars, to underlie the summer there. Though the Walden water is green, the ice is beautifully blue. It looks like solidified azure, as, far off, it is drawn through the streets.

These ice-cutters are a merry race, full of jest and sport, and when I went among them they were wont to invite me to saw pit-fashion with them, I standing underneath.

In the winter of '46–7 there came a hundred

men of Hyperborean[1] extraction swoop down on to our pond one morning, with many carloads of ungainly-looking farming tools, — sleds, ploughs, drill-barrows, turf-knives, spades, saws, rakes, and each man was armed with a double-pointed pike-staff, such as is not described in the New-England Farmer or the Cultivator.[2] At first I did not know whether they had come to sow a crop of winter rye, or some other kind of grain recently introduced from Iceland. As I saw no manure, I judged that they meant to skim the land, as I had done with my field the year before, thinking the soil was deep and had lain fallow long enough. They said that a gentleman-farmer,[3] a Mr. Tudor, who was behind the

[1] It may be well to add here the original form of the passage in "Economy" where the ducking of one of these Hyperboreans is celebrated: —

"You are no doubt wont to pity the poor, clumsy Irish laborers, who work on our railroads in the winter, or cut ice in our ponds, in such mean and ragged clothes, while you are shivering in your own more tidy and fashionable garments. And so did I, till one of the last, who had slipped into the pond one bitter cold day, came to my house to warm him, — for if it had not been for my fire, his limbs would have been frozen, — and I saw him strip off three pairs of pants, and two pairs of stockings, ere he got down to the skin."

[2] Names of weekly newspapers in Boston.

[3] The "gentleman-farmer" who directed this ice-cutting at Walden, which turned out badly, was no doubt the firm of Jarvis & Wyeth, large ice dealers, who had already great establishments at Fresh Pond in Cambridge, and soon after made an ice-pond at the hamlet of Assabet on the north branch of the Concord River, where now is the manufacturing town of Maynard. This also proved unlucky; for in the great gale of April, 1851, the enormous

scenes, wanted to double his money, which, as I understood, amounted to half a million already; but in order to cover each one of his dollars with another, he took off the only coat, — ay, the skin itself, of Walden Pond, in the midst of a hard winter. They went to work at once, plowing, harrowing, rolling, furrowing, in admirable order, as if they were bent on making this a model farm. But when I was looking sharp to see what kind of seed they dropped into the furrow, a gang of fellows by my side suddenly began to hook up the virgin mould itself, with a peculiar jerk, clean down to the sand, or rather, the water, — for it was a very springy soil, — indeed all the *terra firma* there was, — and haul it away on sleds; and then I guessed that they must be cutting peat in a bog. So they came and went every day, with a peculiar shriek from the locomotive, from and to some point of the polar regions, as it seemed to me, like a flock of arctic snow-birds.

But sometimes Squaw Walden had her revenge, and a hired man, walking behind his team, slipped through a crack in the ground down toward Tartarus, and he who was so brave before suddenly became but the ninth part of a man, almost gave up his animal heat, and was glad to take refuge in

brick ice-house of the firm at Assabet blew down and was never rebuilt, — the waterfall there proving of much value for woollen mills. The Walden ice, though beautiful and pure, lacks some of the needful qualities, and the Concord families are supplied with more serviceable ice from small ponds and brooks. The lake dedicated to poetry by Thoreau and Emerson has no attribute for practical use; even its fishery is unimportant. — F. B. S.

my house, and acknowledged that there was some virtue in a stove; or sometimes the frozen soil took a piece of steel out of a ploughshare, or a plough got set in the furrow and had to be cut out.

But to speak literally, a hundred Irishmen, with Yankee overseers, came from Cambridge every day to get out the ice and stack it upon the shore in the open air. When Walden was covered with snow, a dozen men were incessantly engaged in scraping it off, over an area of several acres, with various kinds of scrapers drawn by horses. Two men followed with a horse and a slight cutter, — one carefully leading the horse, while the other guided the cutter within a few inches of a rope drawn straight across the ice for ten or a dozen rods. Thus a groove was made on two sides of a parallelogram. Then, with various kinds of gauge-cutters, — that is, cutters connected by a frame with parallel marks or toothless plates, at a proper distance on one or both sides, running in the last-made groove, — the whole area was finally grooved in squares of twenty-two inches, on an average.

I was told that the best ice-cutters or plows cost over a hundred dollars, and cut four inches at a bout, but it was hard work for a horse. And then men were employed with whip-saws cutting this area into long strips the width of a cake; half a dozen poling the strips along a narrow canal to the loading place, near which one stood with a spade-like chisel to cut off the "cake," which consisted of two squares, and therefore measured twenty-two by forty-four inches. These

cakes were to be finally divided by the shallow groove at the loading aboard ship, so that one man might handle them.

At the end of the canal were a dozen or fifteen men, half on each side, incessantly hauling the cakes up a narrow iron framework or railway, sunk at one end on wood and resting on a sled at the other, with pike-staffs which had a double point, one bent for hauling, the other straight for pushing. Each sled held fourteen or fifteen cakes which weighed about two tons and were drawn by one horse over the ice to the shore where they were rapidly hauled off on to an ice platform, and raised by grappling irons and block and tackle, worked by horses, on to a stack, as surely as so many barrels of flour, and there placed evenly side by side, and row upon row, as if they formed the solid base of an obelisk designed to pierce the clouds. There were sixty men employed at the stacks, about thirty above and thirty below, — about twenty in loading and sledding, and about twenty in scraping, grooving, sawing and poling.

They told me that in a good day they could get out a thousand tons, which was the yield of about one acre.[1] Deep ruts and "cradle holes" were worn in the ice, as on *terra firma*, by the passage of the sleds over the same track, and the horses invariably ate their oats out of cakes of ice hollowed out like buckets. They stacked up the cakes thus in the open air in a pile thirty-five feet high on one side and six or seven rods

[1] This long account of the ice-cutting was mostly omitted from the printed editions of *Walden*. — F. B. S.

square, putting hay between the outside layers to exclude the air; for when the wind, though never so cold, finds a passage through, it will wear large cavities, leaving slight supports or studs only here and there, and finally topple it down. At first it looked like a vast blue fort or Valhalla; but when they began to tuck the coarse meadow hay into the crevices, and this became covered with rime and icicles, it looked like a venerable moss-grown and hoary ruin, built of azure-tinted marble, the abode of Winter, that old man we see in the almanac — his shanty, as if he had a design to estivate with us. They calculated that not twenty-five per cent of this would reach its destination, and that two or three per cent would be wasted in the cars. However, a still greater part of this heap had a different destiny from what was intended; for, either because the ice was found not to keep so well as was expected, containing more air than usual, or else the freightage charged by the R. R. Co. was too high, so that it never got to market. This heap, made in the winter of '46–7, and estimated to contain ten thousand tons, was finally covered with hay and boards; and though it was unroofed the following July, and a part of it carried off, the rest remaining exposed to the sun, it stood over that summer and the next winter, and was not quite melted till September, 1848. Thus the pond recovered the greater part.

Like the water, the Walden ice, seen near at hand, has a green tint, but at a distance is beautifully blue, and you can easily tell it from the white ice of the river, or the merely greenish ice

of some ponds, a quarter of a mile off. Sometimes one of those great cakes slips from the iceman's sled into the village street, and lies there for a week like a great emerald, an object of interest to all passers.

I have noticed that a portion of Walden which in the state of water was green will often, when frozen, appear from the same point of view blue. So the hollows about this pond will, sometimes, in the winter, be filled with a greenish water somewhat like its own, but the next day will have frozen blue. Perhaps the blue color of water and ice is due to the light and air they contain, and the most transparent is the bluest. Ice is an interesting subject for contemplation. They told me that they had some in the ice-houses at Fresh Pond five years old which was as good as ever. Why is it that a bucket of water soon becomes putrid, but frozen remains sweet forever? It is commonly said that this is the difference between the affections and the intellect. I was also told that southern customers objected to the blue color of the Walden ice, and preferred the Fresh Pond ice, which is white, but tastes of weeds.

The purity which men love is like the mists that envelop the earth, not the azure ether beyond. The objection that it did not keep so well may have been more reasonable. Says Confucius, "Of all men there is no one who does not eat and drink; but very few among them know how to distinguish the savors."

Thus for sixteen days I saw from my window a hundred men at work like busy husbandmen, with teams and horses and apparently all the

implements of farming, such a picture as we see on the first page of the almanac; and as often as I looked out I was reminded of the fable of the lark and the reapers, or the parable of the sower, and the like; and now they are all gone, and in thirty days more, probably, I shall look from the same window on the pure sea-green Walden water there, reflecting the clouds and the trees, and sending up its evaporations in solitude, and no traces will appear that a man has ever stood there. Perchance I shall hear a solitary loon laugh as he dives and plumes himself there, or I shall see a lonely fisher in his boat, like a floating leaf, beholding his form reflected in the waves, where lately a hundred men securely labored.

Thus it appears that the sweltering inhabitants of Charleston, New Orleans and Jamaica, of Madras and Bombay and Calcutta, drink at my well. In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonal philosophy of the Bhagvat Geeta, since whose composition years of the gods have elapsed, and in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial; and I doubt if that philosophy is not to be referred to a previous state of existence than this of ours, so remote is its sublimity from our age and conceptions.

I lay down the book and go to my well for water, and lo! there I meet the servant of the Brahmin, priest of Brahma and Vishnu and Indra, who still sits in his temple on the Ganges reading the Vedas, or descendant of the religious devotee who once dwelt at the root of a tree with

his crust and water-jug. I meet his servant come to draw water for his master, and our buckets, as it were, grate together in the same well. The pure Walden water is mingled with the sacred water of the Ganges. With favoring winds it is wafted past the site of the fabulous islands of Atlantis and of the Hesperides, makes the periplus of Hanno, and, floating by Ternate and Tidore and the mouth of the Persian Gulf, melts in the tropic gales of the Indian seas, and is landed in ports of which Alexander only heard the names.

A month or two after this, as I heard, his body was found among the brush, over back of the hills, — so far decomposed that his coffin was carried to it, and it was put into it with pitchforks. But still, in spite of all, I have my suspicions that he might have died a Brahmin's death, dwelling at the roots of trees at last, and been absorbed into the spirit of Brahm. Perhaps he was one of a sect of philosophers, — the only one, — so simple, so abstracted in his thoughts and life from his contemporaries, that his wisdom was foolishness to them. His very vividness of perception, clear knowledge and insights may have made him dumb, — leaving no common consciousness and ground of parlance with mankind. I was not to be deceived, of course, by a few stupid words, or apparent stolidity. [*See passage relating to "Bill Wheeler," p. xxxi of Introduction. This is a continuation of note by Thoreau, printed on p. 195 of this volume.*]

CHAPTER XVII — SPRING

THE opening of large tracts by the ice-cutters commonly causes a pond to break up earlier; for the water, agitated by the wind, even in cold weather, wears away the surrounding ice. But such was not the effect on Walden that year, for she had soon got a thick new garment to take the place of the old. This pond never breaks up so soon as the others in this neighborhood, on account both of its greater depth and its having no stream passing through it to melt or wear away the ice. I never knew it to open in the course of a winter, not excepting that of '52–3, which gave the ponds so severe a trial. It commonly opens about the first of April, a week or ten days later than Flint's Pond or Fair Haven, beginning to melt first on the north side and in the shallower parts where it began to freeze.

I think it indicates better than any water hereabouts the absolute progress of the season, being least affected by transient changes of temperature. A severe cold of a few days' duration in March may very much retard the breaking up of the former ponds, while the temperature of Walden increases almost uninterruptedly. A thermometer thrust into the middle of Walden on the 6th of March, 1847, stood at 32°, or freezing point; near the shore, at 33°; in the middle

of Flint's Pond, the same day, at 32½°; at a dozen rods from the shore, in shallow water, under ice a foot thick, at 36°. The difference of 3½° between the temperature of the deep water and the shallow in the latter pond, and the fact that a great proportion is comparatively shallow, show why it should break up so much sooner than Walden. The ice in the shallowest part was at this time several inches thinner than in the middle. In midwinter the middle had been the warmest and the ice thinnest there. So, also, every one who has waded about the shores of a pond in summer must have perceived how much warmer the water is close to the shore, where only three or four inches deep, than a little distance out, and on the surface where it is deep water, than near the bottom.

In spring the sun not only exerts an influence through the increased temperature of the air and earth, but its heat apparently passes directly through ice a foot or more thick, and is reflected from the bottom in shallow water, and so also warms the water and melts the under side of the ice first, at the same time that it is melting it more directly above, making it uneven, and causing the air bubbles which it contains to extend themselves upward and downward until it is completely honey-combed, and at last disappears suddenly in a single spring rain. Ice has its grain as well as wood, and when a cake begins to rot or "comb," as the phrase is, that is, assume the appearance of honey-comb, whatever may be its position, the air cells are at right angles with what was the water surface. Every one must

have observed that where there is a larger rock or a log rising near to the surface, the ice over it is much thinner, and is frequently quite dissolved by this reflected heat; and I have been told that in the experiment at Cambridge to freeze water in a shallow wooden pond, though the cold air circulated underneath, and so had access to both sides, the reflection of the sun from the bottom more than counterbalanced this advantage, preventing the ice from freezing so thick as in the natural pond.

When a warm rain in the middle of the winter melts off the snow-ice from Walden, and leaves a hard, dark, or transparent ice on the middle, there will be a strip of rotten though thicker white ice, a rod or more wide, about the shores, created by this reflected heat. Also, as I have said, the bubbles themselves within the ice operate as burning-glasses to melt the ice beneath.

Other things being equal, the deeper the water the more slowly it is affected by changes of temperature, whether we consider different ponds or different parts of the same pond. The phenomena of the year take place every day in a pond on a small scale. Every morning, generally speaking, the shallow water is being warmed more rapidly than the deep, though it may not be made so warm after all, and every evening it is being cooled more rapidly until the morning. The day is an epitome of the year. The night is the winter, the morning and evening are the spring and fall, and the noon is the summer. The cracking and booming of the ice indicate a change of temperature. One pleasant morning after a cold

night, February 24th, 1850, having gone to Flint's Pond to spend the day, I noticed with surprise, that when I struck the ice with the head of my axe, it resounded like a gong for many rods around, or as if I had struck on a tight drumhead. The pond began to boom about an hour after sunrise, when it felt the influence of the sun's rays slanted upon it from over the hills; it stretched itself and yawned like a waking man with a gradually increasing tumult, which was kept up three or four hours. It took a short siesta at noon, and boomed once more toward night, as the sun was withdrawing his influence.

In the right stage of the weather a pond fires its evening gun with great regularity. But in the middle of the day, being full of cracks, and the air also being less elastic, it had completely lost its resonance, and probably fishes and muskrats could not then have been stunned by a blow on it. The fishermen say that the "thundering of the pond" scares the fishes and prevents their biting. The pond does not thunder every evening, and I cannot tell surely when to expect its thundering; but though I may perceive no difference in the weather, it does. Who would have suspected so large and cold and thick-skinned a thing to be so sensitive? Yet it has its law to which it thunders obedience when it should as surely as the buds expand in the spring. The earth is all alive and covered with papillæ. The largest pond is as sensitive to atmospheric changes as the globule of mercury in its tube.

One attraction in coming to the woods to live was that I should have leisure and opportunity

to see the Spring come in. The ice in the pond at length begins to be honey-combed, and I can set my heel in it as I walk. Fogs and rains and warmer suns are gradually melting the snow; the days have grown sensibly longer; and I see how I shall get through the winter without adding to my wood-pile, for large fires are no longer necessary. I am on the alert for the first signs of spring, to hear the chance note of some arriving bird, or the striped squirrel's chirp, for his stores must be now nearly exhausted; or see the woodchuck venture out of his winter quarters.

On the 13th of March, after I had heard the bluebird, song-sparrow, and red-wing, the ice was still nearly a foot thick. As the weather grew warmer it was not sensibly worn away by the water, nor broken up and floated off as in rivers, but though it was completely melted for half a rod in width about the shore, the middle was merely honey-combed and saturated with water, so that you could put your foot through it when six inches thick; but by the next day evening, perhaps, after a warm rain followed by fog, it would have wholly disappeared, all gone off with the fog, spirited away. One year I went across the middle only five days before it disappeared entirely.

In 1845 Walden was first completely open on the 1st of April; in '46, the 25th of March; in '47, the 8th of April; in '51, the 28th of March; in '52, the 18th of April; in '53, the 23rd of March; in '54, about the 7th of April.

Every incident connected with the breaking up of the rivers and ponds and the settling of the

weather is particularly interesting to us who live in a climate of so great extremes. When the warmer days come, they who dwell near the river hear the ice crack at night with a startling whoop as loud as artillery, as if its icy fetters were rent from end to end, and within a few days see it rapidly going out. So the alligator comes out of the mud with quakings of the earth. One old man, who has been a close observer of Nature, and seems as thoroughly wise in regard to all her operations as if she had been put upon the stocks when he was a boy, and he had helped to lay her keel — who has come to his growth, and can hardly acquire more of natural lore if he should live to the age of Methuselah, told me, and I was surprised to hear him express wonder at any of Nature's operations, for I thought that there were no secrets between them, that one spring day he took his gun and boat, and thought that he would have a little sport with the ducks. There was ice still on the meadows, but it was all gone out of the river, and he dropped down without obstruction from Sudbury, where he lived, to Fair Haven Pond, which he found, unexpectedly, covered for the most part with a firm field of ice. It was a warm day, and he was surprised to see so great a body of ice remaining. Not seeing any ducks, he hid his boat on the north or back side of an island in the pond, and then concealed himself in the bushes on the south side, to await them. The ice was melted for three or four rods from the shore, and there was a smooth and warm sheet of water, with a muddy bottom, such as the ducks

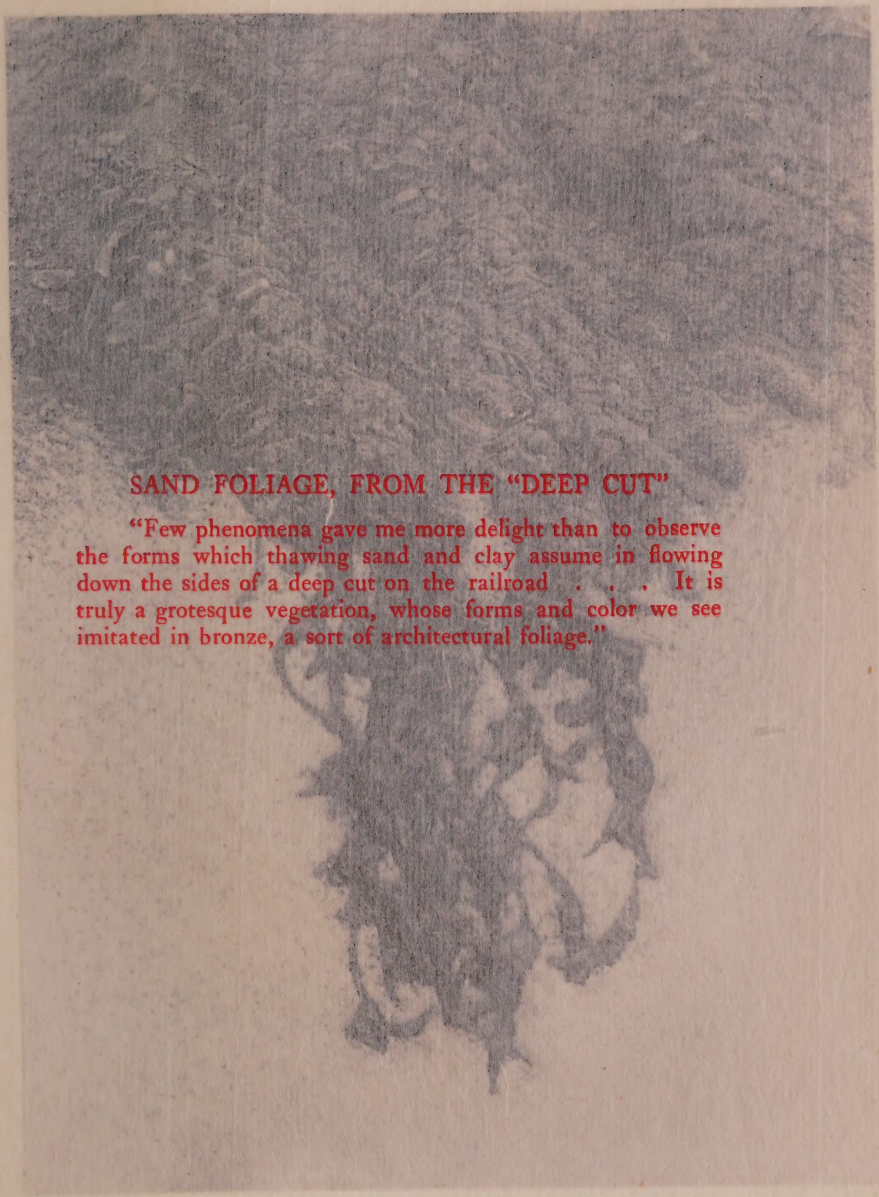
love, within, and he thought it likely that some would be along pretty soon. After he had lain still there about an hour he suddenly heard a low and seemingly very distant sound, but singularly grand and impressive, and unlike anything he had ever heard before, gradually swelling and increasing as if it would have a universal and memorable ending, a sullen rush and roar, which seemed to him all at once like the sound of a vast body of fowl coming in to settle there; and, seizing his gun, he started up in haste and excited; but he found, to his surprise, that the whole body of the ice had started while he lay there, and drifted in to the shore, and the sound he had heard was made by its edge grating on the shore, — at first gently nibbling, as it were, and crumbling off, but at length heaving up and scattering its wrecks along the island to a considerable height before it came to a standstill.

At length the sun's rays have attained the right angle, and warm winds blow up mist and rain and melt the snow banks, and the sun dispersing the mist smiles on a checkered landscape of russet and white smoking with incense, through which the traveller picks his way from islet to islet, cheered by the music of a myriad of tinkling rills and rivulets whose veins are filled with the blood of winter which they are bearing off.

Few phenomena gave me more delight than to observe the forms which thawing sand and clay assume in flowing down the sides of a deep cut on the railroad through which I passed on my way to the village — a phenomenon not very common on so large and perfect a scale as there,

though the number of freshly exposed banks of the right material must have been greatly multiplied since railroads were invented. This part of the cut is about a quarter of a mile long, running north and south, and from twelve to forty feet deep, and in several places an impure clay occurs. The material was sand of every degree of fineness and of various rich colors, commonly mixed with a little clay. When the frost comes out in the spring, and even in a thawing day in the winter, the sand begins to flow down the slopes like lava, sometimes bursting out through the snow and overflowing it where no sand was to be seen before. Innumerable little streams and ripples overlap and interlace one with another, exhibiting a sort of hybrid product, which obeys half-way the law of currents, and half-way that of vegetation. As it flows it takes the forms of sappy leaves or vines, making heaps of pulpy sprays a foot or more in depth, and resembling, as you look down on them, the laciniated lobed and imbricated thalluses of some lichens; or you are reminded of coral, of leopards' paws or birds' feet, of brains or lungs or bowels, and excrements of all kinds. It is a truly *grotesque* vegetation, whose forms and color we see imitated in bronze — a sort of architectural foliage more ancient and typical than acanthus, chicory, ivy, vine, or any vegetable leaves; destined, perhaps, under some circumstances, to become a puzzle to future geologists.

The whole cut impressed me as if it were a cave with its stalactites laid open to the light, these forms being in the cavernous and cyclopean



SAND FOLIAGE, FROM THE "DEEP CUT"

"Few phenomena gave me more delight than to observe the forms which thawing sand and clay assume in flowing down the sides of a deep cut on the railroad . . . It is truly a grotesque vegetation, whose forms and color we see imitated in bronze, a sort of architectural foliage."

though the number of freshly exposed banks of the right material must have been greatly multiplied since railroads were invented. This part of the cut is about a quarter of a mile long, running north and south, and from twelve to forty feet deep, and in several places an impure clay occurs. The material was sand of every degree of fineness and of various rich colors, commonly mixed with a little clay. When the frost comes out in the spring, and even in a thawing day in the winter, the sand begins to flow down the slopes like lava, sometimes bursting out through the snow and overflowing it where no sand was to be seen before. Innumerable little streams and ripples overlap and interlace one with another, exhibiting a sort of hybrid product, which obeys half water, half sand, or currents, and half-way the laws of sand and water. As it flows it takes the forms of sappy leaves or vines, making heaps of pulpy sprays a foot or more in depth, resembling, as you look down on them, the laciniated lobed and imbricated thalluses of some lichens; or you are reminded of coral, of leopards' paws or birds' feet, of brains or lungs or bowels, and excrements of all kinds. It is a truly *grotesque* vegetation, whose forms and color we see imitated in bronze — a sort of architectural foliage more ancient and typical than acanthus, chicory, ivy, vine, or any vegetable leaves; destined, perhaps, under some circumstances, to become a puzzle to future geologists.

The whole cut impressed me as if it were a cave with its stalactites laid open to the light, these forms being in the cavernous and cyclopean

style of the inside of the earth. The various shades of the sand are singularly rich and agreeable, embracing the different iron colors—brown, gray, yellowish, and reddish. When the flowing mass reaches the drain at the foot of the bank it spreads out flatter into *strands*, the separate streams losing their semi-cylindrical form and gradually becoming more flat and broad, running together as they are more moist, till they form an almost flat *sand*, still variously and beautifully shaded, but in which you can trace the original forms of vegetation; till at length, in the water itself, they are converted into *banks*, like those formed off the mouths of rivers, and the forms of vegetation are lost in the ripple marks on the bottom.

The whole bank, which is from twenty to forty feet high, is sometimes overlaid with a mass of this kind of foliage, or sandy rupture, for a quarter of a mile on one or both sides, the produce of one spring day. Sometimes it is slightly excited to productiveness by a rain in midsummer. What makes this sand foliage remarkable is its springing into existence thus suddenly, as if by magic, while to the eye it has all the perfection of the most slowly formed works of Nature and Art. Just as we should think God was more alive and present if we should see the trees grow apace.

So when I see on the one side the inert bank, — for the sun acts on one side first, — and on the other this luxuriant foliage, the creation of an hour, I am affected as if in a peculiar sense I stood in the laboratory of the Artist who made

the world and me, — had come to where he was still at work, sporting on this bank, and with excess of energy strewing his fresh designs about. I feel as if I were nearer to the vitals of the globe, for this sandy overflow is something such a foliaceous mass as the vitals of the animal body.

You find thus in the very sands an anticipation of the vegetable leaf. No wonder that the earth expresses itself outwardly in leaves, it so labors with the idea inwardly. The atoms have already learned this law, and are pregnant with it. The overhanging leaf sees here its prototype. *Internally*, whether in the globe or animal body, it is a moist thick *lobe*, a word especially applicable to the liver and lungs and the *leaves* of fat (λείβω *labor*, *lapsus*, to flow or slip downward, a lapsing; λοβός, *globus*, lobe, globe; also lap, flap, and many other words); *externally*, a dry, thin *leaf*, even as the *f* and *r* are a pressed and dried *b*. The radicals of *lobe* are *lb*, the soft mass of the *b* (single-lobed, or B, double-lobed) with the liquid *l* behind it, pressing it forward. In *globe glb*, the guttural *g* adds to the meaning the capacity of the throat. The feathers and wings of birds are still drier and thinner leaves.[1]

[1] This singular passage is one of those in which, as Ellery Channing somewhere says, Thoreau's "old trade of schoolmaster stuck to him." These etymologies and analogies are rather forced, and, introduced here, they interrupt the description and the flow of thought. They were more in fashion when Thoreau was at Harvard College than they have been since, or are likely to be again. — F. B. S.

Thus, also, you pass from the lumpish grub in the earth to the airy and fluttering butterfly. The very globe continually transcends and translates itself, and becomes winged in its orbit. Even ice begins with delicate crystal leaves, as if it had flowed into moulds which the fronds of water-plants have impressed on the watery mirror. What is a river with all its branches but a leaf divested of its pulp, unless its pulp is intervening earth, forests, and fields, and the towns and cities are the nests or ova of insects in the axils of its veins? What is the river but a tree? for a leaf contains the tree, an oak or pine, and its leaves perchance are lakes and meadows innumerable, and the springs which feed it.

When the sun withdraws the sand ceases to flow, but in the morning the streams will start once more, and branch and branch again into a myriad of others. You may here see, perchance, how blood-vessels are formed. If you look closely you observe that first there pushes forward from the thawing mass a stream of softened sand with a drop-like point, like the ball of the finger, feeling its way slowly and blindly downward, until at last, with more heat and moisture, as the sun gets higher, the most fluid portion, in its effort to obey the law to which the most inert also yields, separates from the latter and forms for itself a meandering channel or artery within that. But when the sun dries the upper surface of this artery, it falls in and reveals a little silvery stream glancing like lightning from mass to mass, from one stage of pulpy

leaves or branches to another, and is ever and anon swallowed up in the sand.

It is wonderful how rapidly yet perfectly the sand organizes itself as it flows, using the best material its mass affords to form the sharp edges of its channel. Such are the sources of rivers.

So perhaps the river channels are the remains of hollow arteries whose upper halves have fallen in, being exposed to the sun; and what, indeed, are these very veins but rivulets, the natural sources of all rivers? In the winter, when the sun shines more obliquely, and Nature to some extent retakes her progeny into her womb, is not the mightiest river bridged over as at first, flowing concealed as in an artery under the surface, until the sun destroys its upper side? And even in summer is there not an effort partially to bridge over again this exposed and naked vein, with a thin pellicle of pads? The home of waters is within the earth, and rivers are but the streams of perspiration. In the silicious matter which the water deposits is perhaps the bony system, and in the still finer soil and organic matter the fleshy fibre or cellular tissue. What is man but a mass of thawing clay? The ball of the human finger is but a drop congealed. The fingers and toes flow to their extent from the thawing mass of the body. How short and feeble are our roots; how uncongenial is our sky! We extend our arms and legs in vain.

Who knows what the human body would expand and flow out to under a more genial heaven stretched on a bank in paradise? Have we not unsatisfied instincts? Is not the hand a spread-

ing *palm* leaf with its lobes and veins? The ear may be regarded, fancifully, as a lichen, *umbilicaria,* on the side of the head, with its lobe or drop, to which is often hung an additional metallic drop. The lip—*labium,* from *labor*(?)—laps or lapses from the sides of the cavernous mouth. The nose is a manifest congealed drop or stalactite. The chin is a still larger drop, the confluent dripping of the face. The cheeks are a perfect slide or avalanche from the brows into the valley of the face, opposed and diffused by the cheek bones. The whole face is a continuous broad shore, and narrow below, to which the chin is a Cape of Good Hope. We might say, by the way, that the face itself is a *terra firma* broad above and narrow below, with its bald polar crown, its temperate zone of greatest breadth, and intelligence and inland seas, its equatorial but sensuous mouth, and its Dutch Cape of Good Hope or Shakespearian Patagonia. Each rounded lobe of the vegetable leaf, too, is a thick and now loitering drop, larger or smaller; the lobes are in fact the fingers of the leaf; and as many lobes as it has, in so many directions it tends to flow, and more genial heat or other genial influences would have caused it to flow yet farther.

Thus it seemed that this one hillside illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature. The Maker of this earth but patented a leaf. What Champollion will decipher this hieroglyphic for us, that we may turn over a new leaf at last? This phenomenon is more exhilarating to me than the luxuriance and fertility of vineyards. True,

it is somewhat excrementitious in its character, and there is no end to the heaps of liver, lights, and bowels, as if the globe were turned wrong side outward; but this suggests at least that Nature has some bowels, and there again is mother of humanity. This is the frost coming out of the ground; this is Spring. It precedes the green and flowery spring, as mythology precedes regular poetry.

I know of nothing more purgative of winter fumes and indigestions. It convinces me that Earth is still in her swaddling-clothes, and stretches forth baby fingers on every side. Fresh curls spring from the baldest brow. There is nothing inorganic. These foliaceous heaps lie along the banks like the slag of a furnace, showing that Nature is "in full blast" within; but there is no admittance, except on business. Ye dead and alive preachers, ye have no business here, ye will enter it only as your tomb, to be melted over again.

The earth is not a graveyard full of skeletons, but a granary full of seeds. It is not a mere fragment of dead history, strata upon strata like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, — but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit; not a fossil earth, but a living earth, compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic. Its throes will heave our exuviæ from their graves. You may melt your metals and cast them into the most beautiful moulds you can; they will never excite me like the forms which this molten earth

flows out into. And not only it, but the institutions upon it, are plastic like clay in the hands of the potter.

Ere long, not only on these banks, but on every hill and plain, and in every hollow, the frost comes out of the ground like a dormant quadruped from its burrow, and seeks the sea with music, or migrates to other climes in clouds. Thaw with his gentle persuasion is more powerful than Thor with his hammer. The one melts, the other but breaks in pieces.

When the ground was partially bare of snow, and a few warm days had dried its surface somewhat, it was pleasant to compare the first tender signs of the infant year just peeping forth with the stately beauty of the withered vegetation which had withstood the winter — golden-rods, pinweeds, and graceful wild grasses, more obvious and interesting frequently than in summer even, as if not till then was their beauty ripe; wild oats perchance and life-everlasting whose autumn has now arrived; even cotton-grass, cattails, mulleins, johnswort, hard-hack, meadow-sweet, and other strong-stemmed plants, those unexhausted granaries of winter whose seeds entertain the earliest birds — decent weeds, at least, which widowed Nature wears.

I am particularly attracted by the arching and sheaf-like top of the wool-grass; it brings back the summer to our winter memories, and is among the forms which art loves to copy, and which, in the vegetable kingdom, have the same relation to types already in the mind of man that astronomy has. It is an antique style older than Greek

or Egyptian, a lighter and more graceful Ionic, a simpler Doric, a richer Corinthian, a more various Composite.

Many of the phenomena of Winter are suggestive of an inexpressible tenderness and fragile delicacy. We are accustomed to hear this king described as a rude and boisterous tyrant; but with the gentleness of a lover he adorns the tresses of Summer.

At the approach of spring the red-squirrels got under my house, two at a time, directly under my feet as I sat reading or writing, and kept up the queerest chuckling and chirruping and vocal pirouetting and gurgling sounds that ever were heard; and when I stamped they only chirruped the louder, as if past all fear and respect in their mad pranks, defying humanity to stop them. No, you don't — chickaree — chickaree. They were wholly deaf to my arguments, or failed to perceive their force, and fell into a strain of invective that was irresistible.

The first sparrow of spring! The year beginning with younger hope than ever! The faint silvery warblings heard over the partially bare and moist fields from the bluebird, the song-sparrow, and the red-wing, as if the last flakes of winter tinkled as they fell! What at such a time are histories, chronologies, traditions, and all written revelations? The brooks sing carols and glees to the spring. The marsh-hawk sailing low over the meadow is already seeking the first slimy life that awakes. —

> There is health in thy gray wing;
> Health of Nature's furnishing.

The sough of melting snow is heard in all dells, and on all hillsides, and by the sunny river banks, and the ice dissolves apace in all ponds. The grass flames up on the hillsides like a spring fire, — "et primitus oritur herba imbribus primoribus evocata," — as if the earth sent forth an inward heat to greet the returning sun; not yellow but green is the color of its flame; — the symbol of perpetual youth, the grass-blade, like a long green ribbon, streams from the sod into the summer, checked indeed by the frost, but anon pushing on again, lifting its last year's spear of withered hay with the fresh life below. It grows as steadily as the rill which oozes out of the ground. It is almost identical with that, for in the growing days of June, when the rills are dry, the grass-blades are their channels, and from year to year the herds drink at this perennial green stream, and the mower draws from it betimes their winter supply. So our human life but dies down to its root, and still puts forth its green blade to eternity.[1]

Walden is melting apace. There is a canal two rods wide along the northerly and westerly sides, and wider still at the east end. A great field of ice has cracked off from the main body. I hear a song-sparrow singing from the bushes on the shore — *olit, olit, olit — chip, chip, chip, che char — che wiss, wiss, wiss.* He too is helping to crack it. How handsome the great sweeping curves in the edge of the ice, answering some-

[1] This passage is from one of the early Journals. — F. B. S.

what to those of the shore, but more regular! It is unusually hard, owing to the recent severe but transient cold, and all watered or waved like a palace floor. But the wind slides eastward over its opaque surface in vain, till it reaches the living surface of the water. It is glorious to behold the life and joy of this ribbon of water sparkling in the sun, the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth, as if it spoke the joy of the fishes within it, and of the sands on its shore, reflecting a silvery sheen as from the scales of a *leuciscus*, as it were all one active fish.

Such is the contrast between winter and spring. Walden was dead and is alive again. But this spring it broke up more gradually, as I have said.

The change from storm and winter to serene and mild weather, from dark and sluggish hours to bright and elastic ones, is a memorable crisis which all things proclaim. It is seemingly instantaneous at last. Suddenly an influx of light filled my house, though the evening was at hand, and the clouds of winter still overhung it, and the eaves were dripping with sleety rain. I looked out the window, and lo! where yesterday was cold gray ice there lay the transparent pond, already calm and full of hope as on a summer evening, reflecting a summer evening sky in its bosom, though none was visible overhead, as if it had intelligence with some remote horizon. I heard a robin in the distance, the first I had heard for many a thousand years, methought, whose note I shall not forget for many a thousand more — the same sweet and powerful song

as of yore. O the evening robin, at the end of a New England summer day! If I could ever find the twig he sits upon! I mean *he;* I mean *the twig*. This at least is not the *Turdus migratorius*. The green pitch-pines and shrub-oaks about my house, which had so long drooped and cowered, suddenly resumed their several characters; looked brighter, greener, and more erect and alive, as if effectually cleansed and restored by the rain, and fitted once more to express their share of immortal beauty, and make a part of this work which they call Kosmos, or Beauty. I knew that it would not rain any more.

You may tell by looking at any twig of the forest, ay, at your very wood-pile, whether its winter is past or not. As it grew darker, I was startled by the *honking* of geese flying low over the woods, like weary travellers getting in late from southern lakes, and indulging at last in unrestrained complaint and mutual consolation. Standing at my door, I could hear the rush of their wings; when, driving toward my house, they suddenly spied my light, and with hushed clamor wheeled and settled in the pond. So I came in, and shut the door, and passed my first spring night in the woods.

In the morning I watched the geese from the door through the mist, sailing in the middle of the pond, fifty rods off, so large and tumultuous that Walden appeared like an artificial pond for their amusement. But when I stood on the shore they at once rose up with a great flapping of wings at the signal of their commander, and when they had got into rank circled about over

my head, twenty-nine of them, and then steered straight to Canada, with a regular *honk* from the leader at intervals, trusting to break their fast in muddier pools. A "plump" of ducks rose at the same time and took the route to the north in the wake of their noisier cousins.

For a week I heard the circling groping clangor of some solitary goose in the foggy mornings, seeking its companion, and still peopling the woods with the sound of a larger life than they could sustain. In April also the pigeons were seen again flying express in small flocks, and in due time I heard the martins twittering over my clearing, though it had not seemed that the township contained so many that it could afford me any, and I fancied that they were peculiarly of the ancient race that dwelt in hollow trees ere white men came. The Rhodian children greeted the swallow with a song, beginning, —

> "The swallow has come,
> The swallow has come,
> Bringing beautiful hours,
> Beautiful seasons," etc.

Troops of them carrying about a swallow, sang this from door to door, and collected provisions in return. Does not the martin bring beautiful seasons to us? In almost all climes the tortoise and the frog are among the precursors and heralds of this season, and birds fly with song and glancing plumage, and plants spring and bloom, and winds blow, to correct this slight oscillation of the poles and preserve the equilibrium of Nature.

As every season seems best to us in its turn, so the coming in of Spring is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and is in fact in Nature the realization of the Golden Age. —

"Eurus ad Auroram, Nabathæaque regna recessit,
Persidaque, et radiis juga subdita matutinis."

"The East Wind withdrew to Aurora and the Nabathæan kingdom,
And the Persian, and the ridges placed under the morning rays.

. . . . . .

Man was born. Whether that Artificer of things,
The origin of a better world, made him from the divine seed,
Or the earth being recent and lately sundered from the high
Ether, retained some seeds of cognate heaven."

A single gentle rain in the spring makes the grass look many shades greener. So our prospects brighten on the influx of better thoughts. We should be fortunate and blessed if we were so sane and in season, with our robes always tucked up, that we were able and could afford to live in the present always, without any definite or elected object from day to day, and took advantage of every accident that befell us, like the grass which confesses the influence of the slightest dew that falls on it; and did not spend our time in making up for the neglect of past opportunities, which we call doing our duty, and so losing the present ones; if we could without fail be *that* always where God and Nature are, and not live on a tangent to the sphere, — for the world is round.

As an old poet says, "Though man proposeth, God disposeth all." True, he is a very *present* help in trouble, but the chief trouble is that we live in the past and in traditions, where he is not. What have we to boast of? We prefer the muddy and dusty ruts to the green expanding plains. We make ourselves the very sewers, the cloacæ of Nature.

I, too, revive as does the grass after rain. We are never so flourishing, our day is never so fair but that the sun may come out a little brighter through mists, and we yearn to live after a better fashion.

We loiter in winter while it is already spring. In a pleasant spring morning all men's sins are forgiven. Such a day is a truce to vice. While such a sun holds out to burn, the vilest sinner may return. Through our own recovered innocence we discern the innocence of our neighbors. You may have known your neighbor yesterday for a thief, a drunkard, or a sensualist, and merely pitied or despised him, and despaired of the world; but the sun shines bright and warm this first spring morning, reforming and recreating the world, and you meet him serenely at some work, and see how his exhausted and debauched veins expand with still joy and bless the new day, feel the spring influence with the innocence of infancy, and all his faults are forgotten. There is not only an atmosphere of good-will about him, but even a savor of holiness groping for expression, blindly and ineffectually perhaps, like a new-born instinct, and for a short hour the south hillside echoes to no vulgar jest. You

see some innocent fair shoots preparing to burst from his gnarled rind and try another year's life, tender and fresh as the youngest plant. Even he has entered into the joy of his Lord.

Why the jailer does not leave open his prison doors, — why the judge does not dismiss his case, — why the preacher does not dismiss his congregation! It is because they do not obey the hint which God gives them, nor accept the pardon which he freely offers to all.

"A return to goodness produced each day in the tranquil and beneficent breath of the morning, causes that in respect to the love of virtue and the hatred of vice, one approaches a little the primitive nature of man, as the sprouts of the forest which has been felled. In like manner the evil which one does in the interval of a day prevents the germs of virtues which began to spring up again from developing themselves and destroys them.

"After the germs of virtue have thus been prevented many times from developing themselves, then the beneficent breath of evening does not suffice to preserve them. As soon as the breath of evening does not suffice longer to preserve them, then the nature of man does not differ much from the brute. Men, seeing the nature of this man like that of the brute, think that he has never possessed the innate faculty of reason. Are those the true and natural sentiments of man?"

"The Golden Age was first created, which without any avenger
Spontaneously without law cherished fidelity and rectitude.

Punishment and fear were not; nor were threatening
words read
On suspended brass; nor did the suppliant crowd fear
The words of their judge; but were safe without an
avenger.
Not yet the pine felled on its mountains had descended
To the liquid waves that it might see a foreign world,
And mortals knew no shores but their own.

. . . . . .

There was eternal spring, and placid zephyrs with warm
Blasts soothed the flowers born without seed."

On the 29th of April, as I was fishing from the bank of the river near the Nine-Acre-Corner bridge, standing on the quaking grass and willow roots, where the muskrats lurk, I heard a singular rattling sound, somewhat like that of the sticks which boys play with their fingers, when, looking up, I observed a very slight and graceful hawk, like a night-hawk, alternately soaring like a ripple and tumbling a rod or two over and over, showing the underside of its wings, which gleamed like a satin ribbon in the sun, or like the pearly inside of a shell. This sight reminded me of falconry and what nobleness and poetry are associated with that sport. The Merlin it seemed to me it might be called, but I care not for its name. It was the most ethereal flight I had ever witnessed. It did not simply flutter like a butterfly, nor soar like the larger hawks, but it sported with proud reliance in the fields of air; mounting again and again with its strange chuckle, it repeated its free and beautiful fall, turning over and over like a kite, and then recovering from its lofty tumbling, as if it had never set its foot on *terra firma*. It appeared

to have no companion in the universe, — sporting there alone, — and to need none but the morning and the ether with which it played. It was not lonely, but made all the earth lonely beneath it. Where was the parent which hatched it, its kindred, and its father in the heavens? The tenant of the air, it seemed related to the earth but by an egg hatched some time in the crevice of a crag; — or was its native nest made in the angle of a cloud, woven of the rainbow's trimmings and the sunset sky, and lined with some soft midsummer haze caught up from earth? Its eyry now some cliffy cloud?

Beside this I got a rare mess of golden and silver and bright cupreous fishes, which looked like a string of jewels. This spring ramble was very invigorating, and purgative of wintry fumes and dumps. Ah! I have penetrated to those meadows on the morning of many a first spring day, jumping from hummock to hummock, from willow root to willow root, when the wild river valley and the woods were bathed in so pure and bright a light as would have waked the dead, if they had been slumbering in their graves, as some suppose. There needs no stronger proof of immortality. All things must live in such a light. O Death, where was thy sting? O Grave, where was thy victory, then? It was glorious to see the winds appeased, the sea becalmed, the soft season, the serene firmament, the still air, and the beauty of the watery scene. The silver-scaled fishes on the gravel gliding hastily, as it were, from the heat, or seen through clear streams, with fins shining brown as cinnabar,

and chisel tails darted here and there. The new lustre enlightening all the land, beamed on the small pebbles, on the sides of rivers, and on the strands which looked like beryl, while the reflections of the rays played on the banks in variegated gleams. Our opaque stream did not absorb the light, but reflected it all.

Our village life would stagnate if it were not for the unexplored forests and meadows which surround it. We need the tonic of wildness, — to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable.

We can never have enough of Nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and Titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder-cloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander. We are cheered when we observe the vulture feeding on the carrion which disgusts and disheartens us, and deriving health and strength from the repast.

There was a dead horse in the path to my house, which compelled me sometimes to go out

of my way, especially in the night when the air was heavy, but the assurance it gave me of the strong appetite and inviolable health of Nature was my compensation for this. I love to see that Nature is so rife with life that myriads can be afforded to be sacrificed and suffered to prey on one another; that tender organizations can be so serenely squashed out of existence like pulp — tadpoles which herons gobble up, and tortoises and toads run over in the road; and that sometimes it has rained flesh and blood! With the liability to accident, we must see how little account is to be made of it. The impression made on a wise man is that of universal innocence. Poison is not poisonous after all, nor are any wounds fatal. Compassion is a very untenable ground. It must be very expeditious. Its pleadings will not bear to be stereotyped.

Early in May, or by the last of April, the oaks, hickories, maples, and other trees, just putting out amidst the pine woods around the pond, imparted a brightness like sunshine to the landscape, especially in cloudy days, as if the sun were breaking through mists and shining faintly on the hillsides here and there. —

> When the oaks are in the gray,
> Then farmers plant away.

On the 3rd or 4th of May I saw a loon in the pond, and during the first week of the month I heard the whippoorwill, the brown-thrasher, the veery, the wood-pewee, the chewink, and other birds. I had heard the wood-thrush long before. The phœbe had already come once more and

looked in at my door and window, to see if my house was cavern-like enough for her, sustaining herself on humming wings with clenched talons, as if she held by the air while she surveyed the premises. The sulphur-like pollen of the pitch-pine soon covered the pond and the stones and rotten wood along the shore, with its yellow dust, so that you could have collected a barrel-ful. These are the "sulphur showers" we hear of. Even in Calidas' drama of Sacontala, we read of "rills dyed yellow with the golden dust of the lotus." And so the seasons went rolling on into summer, as one rambles into higher and higher grass. —

> He knows no change who knows the true,
> And on it keeps his eye;
> Who always still the unseen doth view;
> Only the false and the apparent die.
> Things change, but change not far,
> From what they are not but to what they are;
> Or rather, 't is our ignorance that dies,
> While ever lives the knowledge of the wise.

Thus was my first year's life in the woods completed; and the second year was like unto it. I finally left Walden September 6th, 1847.

CHAPTER XVIII — CONCLUSION

To the sick the doctors wisely recommend a change of air and scenery. Thank Heaven, here is not all the world. The buck-eye does not grow in New England, and the mocking-bird is rarely heard here. The wild-goose is more of a cosmopolite than we; he breaks his fast in Canada, takes a luncheon in the Ohio, and plumes himself for the night in a southern bayou. Even the bison, to some extent, keeps pace with the seasons, cropping the pastures of the Colorado only till a greener and sweeter grass awaits him by the Yellowstone. Yet we think that if rail-fences are pulled down, and stone-walls piled up on our farms, bounds are henceforth set to our lives and our fates decided. If you are chosen town-clerk, forsooth, you cannot go to Tierra del Fuego this summer: but you may go to the land of infernal fire nevertheless. The universe is wider than our views of it.

Yet we should oftener look over the tafferel of our craft, like curious passengers, and not make the voyage like stupid sailors picking oakum. The other side of the globe is but the home of our correspondent. Our voyaging is only great-circle sailing, and the doctors prescribe for diseases of the skin merely. One hastens to Southern Africa to chase the giraffe, but surely that is not

the game he would be after. How long, pray, would a man hunt giraffes if he could? Snipes and woodcocks also may afford rare sport, but I trust it would be nobler game to shoot one's self. —

> "Direct your eye right inward, and you 'll find
> A thousand regions in your mind
> Yet undiscovered. Travel them, and be
> Expert in home-cosmographie."

What does Africa — what does the West stand for? Is not our own interior white on the chart, black though it may prove, like the coast, when discovered? Is it the source of the Nile, or the Niger, or the Mississippi, or a North-west passage around this continent, that we would find? Are these the problems which most concern mankind? Is Franklin the only man who is lost, that his wife should be so earnest to find him? Does Mr. Grinnell know where he himself is? Be rather the Mungo Park, the Lewis and Clarke and Frobisher, of your own streams and oceans; explore your own higher latitudes — with shiploads of preserved meats to support you, if they be necessary, and pile the empty cans sky-high for a sign to give your successors. Were preserved meats invented to preserve meat merely?

Nay, be a Columbus to whole new continents and worlds within you, opening new channels, not of trade, but of thought. Every man is the lord of a realm beside which the earthly empire of the Czar is but a petty state, a hummock left by the ice. Yet some can be patriotic who have no *self*-respect, and sacrifice the greater to the

less. They love the soil which makes their graves, but have no sympathy with the spirit which may still animate their clay. Patriotism is a maggot in their heads. What was the meaning of that South-Sea Exploring Expedition, with all its parade and expense, but an indirect recognition of the fact that there are continents and seas in the moral world, to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him, — but that it is easier to sail many thousand miles through cold and storm and cannibals, in a government ship, with five hundred men and boys to assist one, than it is to explore the private sea, the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean of one's being alone. —

> " Erret, et extremos alter scrutetur Iberos.
> Plus habet hic vitæ, plus habet ille viæ."

Let them wander and scrutinize the outlandish Australians.
I have more of God, they more of the road.

It is not worth the while to go round the world to count the cats in Zanzibar. Yet do this even till you can do better, and you may perhaps find some " Symmes' Hole " by which to get at the inside at last. England and France, Spain and Portugal, Gold Coast and Slave Coast, all front on this private sea; but no bark from them has ventured out of sight of land, though it is without doubt the direct way to India.

If you would learn to speak all tongues and conform to the customs of all nations, if you would travel farther than all travellers, be naturalized in all climes, vanish all the chimeras, and

cause the Sphinx to dash her head against a stone, even obey the precept of the old philosopher, and Explore thyself. Herein are demanded the eye and the nerve. Only the defeated and deserters go to the wars, cowards that run away and enlist. Start now on that farthest western way, which does not pause at the Mississippi or the Pacific, nor conduct toward a worn-out China or Japan, but leads on direct a tangent to this sphere, summer and winter, day and night, sun down, moon down, and at last earth down too.

It is said that Mirabeau took to highway robbery "to ascertain what degree of resolution was necessary in order to place one's self in formal opposition to the most sacred laws of society." [1] He declared that "a soldier who fights in the ranks does not require half so much courage as a foot-pad," — "that honor and religion have never stood in the way of a well-considered and a firm resolve." This was even manly, as the world goes; and yet it was idle, if not desperate. A saner man would have found himself often enough "in formal opposition" to what are deemed "the most sacred laws of society," through

[1] Here the printers omitted this passage in Thoreau's manuscript, copied from some sketch of Mirabeau: —

"'Tell me,' said Mirabeau, 'Du Saillant, — when you lead your regiment into the heat of a battle to conquer a province to which he whom you call your master has no right whatever, — do you consider that you are performing a better action than mine, in stopping your friend on the highway and demanding his purse?' 'I obey without reasoning,' replied the Count. 'And I reason without obeying, when obedience appears to me to be contrary to reason,' rejoined Mirabeau."

obedience to yet more sacred laws, and so have tested his resolution without going out of his way.

It is not for a man to put himself in such an attitude to society, but to maintain himself in whatever attitude he find himself through obedience to the laws of his being which will never be one of opposition to a just government, if he should chance to meet with such. We would not have a rabid virtue that will be revenged on society, and descends on it, — not like the morning dew to refresh it, but like the fervid noonday sun to wither it.

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true I fear that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world — how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I had wished not to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; Heaven be about him in his manhood even; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

It is a ridiculous demand which England and America make, that you shall speak so that they can understand you. Neither men nor toad-stools grow so. As if that were important, and there were not enough to understand you without them. As if Nature could support but one order of understandings, could not sustain birds as well as quadrupeds, flying as well as creeping things, and *hīsh* and *whoa*, which Bright can understand, were the best English. As if there were safety in stupidity alone. I fear chiefly lest my expression may not be *extra-vagant* enough — may not wander far enough beyond the narrow limits of my daily experience, so as to be adequate to the truth of which I have been convinced. *Extra*

vagance! it depends on how you are yarded. The migrating buffalo, which seeks new pastures in another latitude, is not extravagant like the cow which kicks over the pail, leaps the cow-yard fence, and runs after her calf, in milking time.

I desire to speak somewhere *without* bounds; like a man in a waking moment, to men in their waking moments; for I am convinced that I cannot exaggerate enough even to lay the foundation of a true expression. Who that has heard a strain of music feared then lest he should speak extravagantly any more forever? In view of the future or possible, we should live quite laxly and undefined in front, our outlines dim and misty on that side; as our shadows reveal an insensible perspiration toward the sun. The volatile truth of our words should continually betray the inadequacy of the residual statement. Their truth is instantly *translated;* its literal monument alone remains. The words which express our faith and piety are not definite; yet they are significant and fragrant like frankincense to superior natures.[1]

Why level downward to our dullest perception always, and praise that as common-sense? The

[1] Here a considerable passage was omitted, although some of its substance appeared elsewhere: —

"If the reader thinks that I am vainglorious, and set myself above others, I assure him that I could tell a justified story respecting myself as well as him, if my spirits held out; could encourage him with a sufficient list of my failures, and flow as humbly as the gutters. I think worse of myself than he is likely to think of me, — and better, too, perchance, — being better acquainted with the man. Finally, I will tell him this secret, if he

commonest sense is the sense of men asleep, which they express by snoring. Sometimes we are inclined to class those who are once-and-a-half witted with the half-witted, because we appreciate only a third part of their wit. Some would find fault with the morning-red, if they ever got up early enough.

"They pretend," as I hear, "that the verses of Kabir have four different senses; illusion, spirit, intellect, and the exoteric doctrine of the Vedas;" but in this part of the world it is considered a ground for complaint if a man's writings admit of more than one interpretation. While England endeavors to cure the potato-rot, will not any endeavor to cure the brain-rot, which prevails so much more widely and fatally?

I do not imagine that I have attained to obscurity, but I should be proud if no more fatal fault were found with my pages on this score than was found with the Walden ice.

Some are dinning in our ears that we Americans, and moderns generally, are intellectual dwarfs compared with the ancients, or even the Elizabethan men. But what is that to the purpose? A living dog is better than a dead lion. Shall a man go and hang himself because he

will not abuse my confidence, — I put the best face on the matter."

A little later he said in an omitted clause: —

"The too exquisitely cultivated I avoid, as I do the theatre. Their life lacks reality. They offer me wine instead of water. They are surrounded by things that can be bought. They have already sold themselves."—F. B. S.

belongs to the race of pygmies, and not be the biggest pygmy that he can? Let every one mind his own business, and endeavor to be what he was made.

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed, — and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple-tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer?

If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not?

There was an artist who lived in the city of Kouroo who was truly disposed to strive after perfection. One day it came into his mind to make a staff. Having considered that in an imperfect work time is an ingredient, but into a perfect work time does not enter, he said to himself, It shall be perfect in all respects, though I should do nothing else in my life. He proceeded instantly to the forest for wood, being resolved that it should not be made of unsuitable material; and as he searched for and rejected stick after stick, his friends gradually deserted him, for they grew old in their works and died, but still he

grew not older by a moment. His singleness of purpose and resolution, and his elevated piety, endowed him, without his knowledge, with perennial youth. As he made no compromise with Time, Time kept out of his way, and only sighed at a distance because he could not overcome him. Before he had found a stock in all respects suitable the city of Kouroo was a hoary ruin, and he sat on one of its mounds to peel the stick. Before he had given it the proper shape the dynasty of the Candahars was at an end, and with the point of the stick he wrote the name of the last of that race in the sand, and then resumed his work. By the time he had smoothed and polished the staff Kalpa was no longer the pole-star; and ere he had put on the ferule and the head adorned with precious stones, Brahma had awoke and slumbered many times.

But why do I stay to mention these things? When the finishing stroke was put to his work, it suddenly expanded before the eyes of the astonished artist into the fairest of all the creations of Brahma. He had made a new system in making a staff, a world with full and fair proportions; in which, though the old cities and dynasties had passed away, fairer and more glorious ones had taken their places. And now he saw by the heap of shavings still fresh at his feet, that, for him and his work, the former lapse of time had been an illusion, and that no more time had elapsed than is required for a single scintillation from the brain of Brahma to fall on and inflame the tinder of a mortal brain. The mate-

rial was pure, and his art was pure; how could the result be other than wonderful?[1]

We forget the true in all our positions and relations. No face of the matter which we can invent will stead us so well at last as the truth. Truth is like the stuff called "everlasting," it will wear well. For the most part, we are not where we are, but in a false position. Through an infirmity of our natures, we suppose a case and put ourselves into it, and hence are in two cases (the actual and the supposed) at the same time, — which is to be in a dilemma, — and it is doubly difficult to get out. In sane moments we regard only the facts, the case that is. Say what you have to say, not what you ought.

Any truth is better than make-believe. Tom Hyde,[2] the tinker, standing on the gallows, was asked if he had anything to say. "Tell the tailors," said he, "to remember to make a knot in their thread before they take the first stitch." His companion's prayer is forgotten.

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even

[1] I have never seen the original of this legend, and have supposed it was adapted or invented by Thoreau himself. But it has the true Oriental air. — F. B. S.

[2] Who was Tom Hyde, and for what was he hanged? The passage is found in the Journal of 1849, page 383 — a volume no longer existing — with this addition, — "Tom added, 'You Boston folks and Roxbury people will want Tom Hyde to mend your kettles.'" Can he have been one of the early imported English Gypsies, now so common in the region of Boston? — F. B. S.

in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poor-house. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace.

The town's poor seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any.[1] May be they are simply great enough to receive without misgiving. Most think that they are above being supported by the town; but it oftener happens that they are not above supporting themselves by dishonest means, which should be more disreputable. Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society.

If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher said: "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put

[1] The Concord poor-farm, formerly the Stratton farm, of some four acres, lay along the road from the village to Walden, and therefore Thoreau saw much of the town's poor, residing at the almshouse, and helping to till the farm, as he walked to and fro. Several of them are mentioned, though not by name, in the volume. — F. B. S.

it in disorder; from the man the most abject and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played on; it is all dissipation. Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. The shadows of poverty and meanness gather around us, "and lo! creation widens to our view."

We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Crœsus, our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifler. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

It seems to me sometimes that I live in the angle of a leaden wall, into whose composition was poured a little alloy of bell metal. Often, in the repose of my mid-day, there reaches my ears a confused *tintinnabulum* from without. It is the noise of my contemporaries. My neighbors tell me of their adventures with famous gentlemen and ladies, what notabilities they met at the dinner-table; but I am no more interested in such things than in the contents of the Daily Times. The interest and the conversation are about cos-

tume and manners chiefly; but a goose is a goose still, dress it as you will.

They tell me of California and Texas, of England and the Indies, of the Hon. Mr. —— of Georgia or of Massachusetts, all transient and fleeting phenomena, till I am ready to leap from their courtyard like the Mameluke bey. I delight to come to my bearings — not walk in procession with pomp and parade, in a conspicuous place, but to walk even with the Builder of the universe, if I may, — not to live in this restless, nervous, bustling, trivial Nineteenth Century, but stand or sit thoughtfully while it goes by. What are men celebrating? They are all on a committee of arrangements, and hourly expect a speech from somebody. God is only the president of the day, and Webster is his orator.

I love to weigh, to settle, to gravitate, to drive toward God, or whatever be the name, of that which most strongly and rightfully attracts me; — not hang by the beam of the scale and try to weigh less, — not suppose a case, but take the case that is; to travel the only path I can, and that on which no power can resist me. It affords me no satisfaction to commence to spring an arch before I have got to a solid foundation. Let us not play at kittlybenders. There is a solid bottom everywhere.

We read that the traveller asked the boy if the swamp before him had a hard bottom. The boy replied that it had. But presently the traveller's horse sank in up to the girths, and he observed to the boy, "I thought you said that this bog had a hard bottom." "So it has," answered

the latter, "but you have not got half way to it yet." So it is with the bogs and quicksands of society; but he is an old boy that knows it.

Only what is thought, said, or done at a certain rare coincidence is good. I would not be one of those who will foolishly drive a nail into mere lath and plastering; such a deed would keep me awake nights. Give me a hammer, and let me feel for the furrowing. Do not depend on the putty. Drive a nail home and clinch it so faithfully that you can wake up in the night and think of your work with satisfaction, — a work at which you would not be ashamed to invoke the Muse. So will help you God, and so only. Every nail driven should be as another rivet in the machine of the universe, you carrying on the work.

Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth. I sat at a table where were rich food and wine in abundance, and obsequious attendance, but sincerity and truth were not; and I went away hungry from the inhospitable board. The hospitality was as cold as the ices. I thought that there was no need of ice to freeze them. They talked to me of the age of the wine and the fame of the vintage; but I thought of an older, a newer, and purer wine, of a more glorious vintage, which they had not got, and could not buy. The style, the house and grounds and "entertainment" pass for nothing with me. I called on the king, but he made me wait in his hall, and conducted like a man incapacitated for hospitality. There was a man in my neighborhood who lived in a hollow tree. His manners

were truly regal. I should have done better had I called on him.

How long shall we sit in our porticoes practising idle and musty virtues, which any work would make impertinent? As if one were to begin the day with long-suffering, and hire a man to hoe his potatoes; and in the afternoon go forth to practise Christian meekness and charity with goodness aforethought! Consider the China pride and stagnant self-complacency of mankind.

This generation inclines a little to congratulate itself on being the last of an illustrious line; and in Boston and London and Paris and Rome, thinking of its long descent, it speaks of its progress in art and science and literature with satisfaction. There are the Records of the Philosophical Societies, and the public eulogies of *Great Men!* It is the good Adam contemplating his own virtue. "Yes, we have done great deeds, and sung divine songs, which shall never die" — that is, as long as *we* can remember them.

The learned societies and great men of Assyria — where are they? What youthful philosophers and experimentalists we are! There is not one of my readers who has yet lived a whole human life.[1] These may be but the spring months in

[1] This omitted passage seems to belong here: —

"The wisest reformers necessarily do not remember children, youthful men and women, not grown, but growing, — a rising generation. What are all our joy and sorrow, our repentance and reform to them? This truth bursts on us like a revelation when they are met in the street. There is an incalculable health and promise in the

the life of the race. If we have had the seven-years' itch, we have not seen the seventeen-year locust yet in Concord. We are acquainted with a mere pellicle of the globe on which we live. Most have not delved six feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many above it. We know not where we are. Beside, we are sound asleep nearly half our time. Yet we esteem ourselves wise, and have an established order on the surface. Truly, we are deep thinkers, we are ambitious spirits!

As I stand over the insect crawling amid the pine needles on the forest floor, and endeavoring to conceal itself from my sight, and ask myself why it will cherish those humble thoughts, and hide its head from me who might, perhaps, be its benefactor, and impart to its race some cheering information, I am reminded of the greater Benefactor and Intelligence that stands over me the human insect.

There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dulness. I need only suggest what kind of sermons are still listened to in the most enlightened countries. There are such words as joy and sorrow, but they are only the burden of a psalm, sung with a nasal twang, while we believe in the ordinary and mean.[1] We think that we can change our

still growing man, which no maturity is wise enough to treat with for a moment. It can only respect it, and faintly believe in it." — F. B. S.

[1] The following passage, which was omitted, belongs here: —

"It is a singular but consoling fact that it is as hard

clothes only. It is said that the British Empire is very large and respectable, and that the United States are a first-rate power.

We do not believe that a tide rises and falls behind every man which can float the British Empire like a chip, if he should ever harbor it in his mind. Who knows what sort of seventeen-year locust may next come out of the ground? The government of the world I live in was not framed, like that of Britain, in after-dinner conversations over the wine.

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently washed, before science began to record its freshets.

Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts, — from an egg deposited in the living tree many

for a melancholy man to speak from the depth of his sadness as for the poet to give utterance to his inspiration. While he lives, and in the sunshine, he cannot be casually sad enough to convey his real meaning; and he even derives a secondary sadness from this source. The injured man resisting his age and destiny is like a tree struck by lightning, — which rustles its leaves the winter through, not having vigor enough to cast them off." — F. B. S.

years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb — heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board — may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!

I do not say that John or Jonathan will realize all this; but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us.[1] Only that day dawns to which we

[1] "The light that puts out our eyes is darkness to us." A curious speculation on sight also belongs here: "Our eye feels, not simply the most distant objects, — for that which we handle may be equally remote with that which we see, — but rather the subtilest emanations, which can be farthest dispersed. But the intellectual eye is a far more delicate and far-reaching sense, — having the same relation to the bodily eye that the latter has to the finger."

In such sentences as these, Thoreau certainly has "attained to obscurity," for which he sometimes strove.

The close of this final chapter is appropriately hopeful. But in view of the fact that *Walden* was Thoreau's last

are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

of the only two books he published, and that so many from his pen have appeared since his death, we might close it with his other words: —

"We know not yet what we have done, — still less what we are doing. Wait till evening, and other parts of our day's work will shine than we had thought at noon; and we shall discover the real purport of our toil. As when the husbandman has reached the end of the furrow, and looks back, he can best tell where the pressed earth shines most." — F. B. S.

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WHERE I LIVED, AND WHAT I LIVED FOR

Where I have been
There was none seen.

NEARLY all of this volume, addressed to my townsmen, was written eight or nine years ago[1] in the scenery and under the circumstances which it describes; and a considerable part was read at that time as lectures before the Concord Lyceum. In what is now added, the object has been chiefly to make it a complete and true account of that portion of the author's life.

[1] This was early in 1854, when Thoreau was preparing his MS. for the press. The lectures were in 1846–49. — F. B. S.

[*Specimen page.*]

A NEW AND UNABRIDGED "WALDEN"

THE next publication of The Bibliophile Society will be a new and unabridged edition of Thoreau's *Walden*, printed from the author's original MS., — one of the most important literary "finds" of recent years. This MS., which has but recently come to light, contains upwards of twelve thousand words not appearing in any printed edition. Many of the best and most characteristic parts were deliberately "cut out" when the work was first printed, and numerous passages which relate to personal experiences of the author and other well-known individuals in the Concord landscape were changed and printed in such a manner as to make them impersonal; thus depriving them of an intimacy which now adds greatly to their value. It may be added, incidentally, that at that time Thoreau was living, and being then unknown to literary fame, the publishers perhaps thought that his personality would not attract the interest of the public. All of these passages are restored and printed in full.

It has been commonly supposed that the MS. destroyed by the publishers who first printed the work in 1854 — possibly for the purpose of preventing future generations from discovering the changes and omissions — was the only one in existence; and it was not known until lately that Thoreau retained the original draft in his possession. It was discovered among a mass of supposedly worthless papers and journals left by

Thoreau in an old chest; and after its discovery, passed directly into the hands of Mr. Bixby, who with characteristic generosity has turned it over to The Bibliophile Society to print for the members.

The authenticity of the MS. is unquestioned; it is entirely in the handwriting of the author. It has been carefully gone over by Mr. F. B. Sanborn, Thoreau's biographer, who has compared it line by line with the printed text, — in which corrections and additions have now been made on more than three hundred pages. The accompanying facsimile shows the corrections in a single page of the printed text. Surely no further evidence is required to illustrate the need of a new and authoritative text of this standard work, — the greatest and most personal of Thoreau's writings.

Mr. Sanborn has prepared a comprehensive introduction, and throughout the text he has added a great number of explanatory notes drawn from personal reminiscences of the author and his fellow-townsmen,—Emerson, Hawthorne, Channing and others, — which no other person now living could supply.

The past few years have witnessed an astonishing increase in the demand for Thoreau material, and even detached and unimportant fragments of his MSS. bring fabulous prices at auction. The discovery of so important an item as the partly-unpublished *Walden* MS. will furnish a distinct surprise to the public, and the importance of this issue will be far-reaching in the literary world.

The work will be printed on handmade paper, with the Society's usual watermark, and issued in two royal octavo volumes. The type, spacing, margins, etc., will be the same as shown in this announcement. The illustrations will be a special feature of the edition. They consist chiefly of photographs of scenes of Thoreau's haunts at Walden Pond, and the numerous inserted pictures are made direct from original negatives by one of the most expert photographers in this country. They are of remarkable beauty and perfection. A specimen illustration is herewith enclosed.

The pictorial titlepage is designed and engraved on copper by Hopson, and also appears in duplicate, etched by Bicknell.

The volumes will be bound in boards with parchment backs and corners, and furnished with fleece-lined leatherette dust-proof cases. The cost will not exceed thirty-one dollars for each set. One copy will be issued to each subscribing member. *The subscription list will close on May 10.*

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